

## TRIUNE GOD

Humanity is limited in its ability to describe the mystery of God, especially Catholic belief in the mystery of God's triune nature. Yet, Christians have tried to do just that, through words, metaphors, similes, art work, music, and architecture etc. This has been done to provide a sense of the transcendent, a sense of the mystery that Catholics call God. Catholics believe in one God known as three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a relationship of love and unity, a perfect dialogue, God is Love! The Holy Spirit is the expression of the loving relationship between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, is active in the world and is recognisable whenever humanity accepts the invitation to live in right relationship with God and all creation.

The Catholic Church gradually and carefully arrived at certain conclusions about the mystery of God based on its own human experience. The Church came to the knowledge of God, who is triune in essence, as it progressively reflected on its experiences of God's dealings with humanity throughout history. As 21<sup>st</sup> century people, Catholics have the advantage of Tradition in communication with Sacred Scripture to draw attention to a Triune God. If we look back to early Christianity, the seeds of this doctrine were there. Christians were alerted to the trinitarian dimension firstly by Christ, then by the preaching of the Apostles and by their lived experience as people of God e.g., the Pentecost event. But this does not mean we do or can ever understand this unfathomable mystery that is God, three persons in one, it is absolute mystery beyond any human comprehension, we can only glimpse something of this mystery.

Catholics believe that because humanity is created in the image of God there is a spark of God in all. This does not make humanity divine, but creates in the human person an innate yearning for the transcendent. Humanity is drawn toward God who is always and ever inviting humanity into a personal relationship. Because all creation, including humanity, is God's work it reflects the love of the three persons, and it is good. All people are invited into right relationships not only with God, but also with each other and the natural world.

As creatures of God, humanity has free will to choose, either to be open to God; to let God stir the spark deep within, or to turn away from the invitation. The human person discerns who they are and how they are to act in their relationship with God and all creation through interaction with others and the world. This means that the hermeneutic space where this internal dialogue takes place, where a person discerns how they will

respond, is not empty, but filled with the many influences, values, and learnings gained through life experience. Christians give witness to the Triune God by creating loving communities where the dignity of the human person is respected.

Catholics believe they can come to know God through creation; in the sounds, silences, power, beauty and wonder of it all. For God is all of this and more. As a person matures they may begin to discern the different ways that God's Spirit is expressed in the world, how God is present and active in right relationships. By living through or witnessing human experiences people may come to know something about God, for God calls all people to God's self.

Catholics believe that people can come to know God through Jesus who is both human and divine. This is revelation, how God reveals Godself. Jesus shows us how to build right relationships, how to love one another and love the Father. Building right relationships means that people have to make choices. The loving relationship that is God, expressed through Jesus and his mission, calls believers to make right choices in morally/ethically challenging situations. Catholics respond, animated by the spirit of the love between the Father and Son to build right relationships in the context of today. This is not always easy or popular.

It is through Scripture and Tradition that Catholics come to know and understand Jesus' mission and his teaching. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. The Church has been entrusted with the interpretation of Scripture and the lived Tradition (dogma, rituals and symbols etc.). Catholic belief in the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the love between God the Father and God the Son, has led people of faith throughout the ages to try to explain a Triune God through symbols that point to something greater, symbols that may help people to understand something about God. e.g., fire, dove, breath, wind, flames.

Tradition is the knowledge and insight gained by people of faith over time, not only from the time of Jesus, but stretching back into ancient times to learn from the relationship that the Hebrews had with God. Scripture also gives an insight into something about God and the relationship between God and humanity throughout the ages. This knowledge is not static or finite, for people continue to make meaning, to recontextualise the Christian narrative and will continue to do so into the future.

