

One God

One of the doctrines of the Church that most of us take for granted without thinking much about is doctrine of the Trinity. It is difficult because it defies rational explanation. And we, as humans, seem to have such an overwhelming need to have an explanation for everything that happens in our world! (Perhaps that is why we are called to have the faith of little children, who accept what they do not understand much more easily.) The Trinity is man's attempt to understand the nature of God. I am sure you have heard the story of the elephant and blind men. They were gathered around the elephant. One blind man put his arms around the elephant's leg and announced that it must be a tree. Another blind man touched the elephant's tail and pronounced what he felt was a snake. Yet another blind man touched the elephant's trunk and decided that what he felt was a hose. This is the way we try to understand the nature of the almighty, all knowing creator of the universe. Isaiah 6:1-8 (among many others) presents an image of a transcendent, almighty, almost scary God. But it also presents a God of love who has taken away guilt. In John 16:5-15 (again among many others), we see a very human Jesus, who will not leave His disciples, or us, alone. Instead He leaves His spirit, the Holy Spirit, to comfort us, to inspire us to live a more Godly life, and to continue to teach us those things that Jesus had not already taught. So we have God presented to us as a Trinity, although it is never called that in the Bible. Another way to say the same thing is that we have God the Creator, who is an infinite God of Love, God the Redeemer, who died for us and by whose death and resurrection we know that will have eternal life, and God the Sanctifier, who teaches us and inspires us to live a more Godly life. All this and yet one God. Perhaps one way to understand this is that I am a minister, a father, and a husband, and yet I am just one man. Similarly, water can be a liquid, a solid (ice), or a vapor (steam) and yet still have the same substance with the same molecular composition, H₂O. So too we have one God, whose nature can be perceived in different ways.

You may ask why any of this is important. If we focus too much on Father, without Jesus and Holy Spirit, we might see God as a terrifying mystery. That is NOT the nature of God. Yet if we focus too much on Jesus, without the Father and the Holy Spirit, it is too easy to say that we can do anything because we know we have been forgiven. That is not the way God wants us to act! And if focus too much on the Holy Spirit, without considering the Father and Jesus, we might conclude

that all that matters is good works, without regard to faith. God calls us to a life of faith. There is one Elephant. There is one God. The best we can do is grope around this vast mystery of the nature of God as we see Him in the world feel in our hearts.

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