

# *What Catholics Believe About God*

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## *Summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Paragraphs 198-267)*

### **We Believe in One God**

God is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything.

“We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only **one true God**, eternal, infinite and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty and ineffable [indescribable, overwhelming], the **Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple.**” (Lateran Council IV, 1215)

God is the **fullness of Being** and of every perfection, without origin and without end—God has a name, he is not an anonymous force

God’s name—YHWH [I Am who Am]—is both personal and mysterious. It expresses God as **infinitely above everything that we can understand or say**. God is not simply the greatest part of creation or a thing inside Creation—He is above and beyond and distinct from what He creates and sustains.

God’s name also **reveals His faithfulness, His graciousness and mercy and His desire to be in relationship with what He creates**. God is not an impersonal force. He is not a tyrant who needs placating or a king who demands our servile fear.

**God is always there, present to His people in order to save them.** He is the faithful and compassionate God who remembers His people and His promises—He comes to free them. He is the God who, from beyond space and time, can do this and wills to do it, the God who will put his almighty power to work for this plan.

**God is truth**, His words cannot deceive. God’s truth is His wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world. God is also truthful when He reveals Himself—the teaching that comes from God is true instruction.

**God is sheer gratuitous love**—Love is not something God does, it is who God IS. God’s love is everlasting, creative and life-giving.



## Implications of Faith in One God

- **Coming to know God's greatness and majesty**—everything visible and invisible, the furthest extent of the universe and the deepest interior hidden part of creation comes from God.
- **Living in thanksgiving**—if there is One God, then everything we have and everything we are comes from Him—our attitude to this giver of all good gifts is one of gratitude and thankfulness
- **Making good use of created things**—we do not worship creation, but only the Creator, God. We make use of creation to bring us closer to Him and to serve the greater good. We must detach ourselves from created things and our worldly desires in order to give ourselves entirely to God
- **Trusting God in every circumstance**—All events that occur are under God's direction and command; all things will turn to good for those who love God. We can trust in His goodness and power to bring about what is best for us and for those we love.

*“If you understood him, it would not be God.” (St. Augustine)*

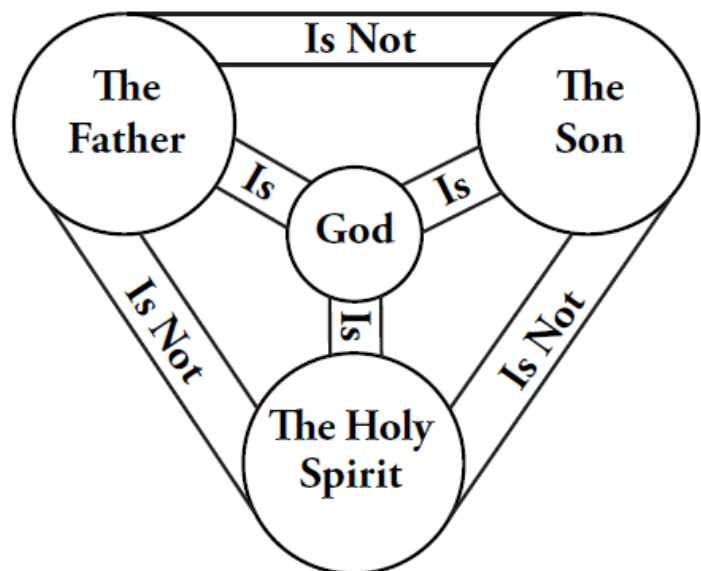
## We Believe in One God who is a Communion of Love— A Holy Trinity of Persons

Christians are baptized in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their **names**, for there is only one God.

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the **central mystery of Christian faith and life**. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the **source of all the other mysteries** of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the **most fundamental and essential teaching** in the hierarchy of the truths of faith.

We do not confess three gods, but **one God in three persons**—the divine persons do not divide the one divinity among themselves [i.e. each is not 1/3 of God] but **each of them is God whole and entire**.

The **divine Persons are really distinct from each other**—God is one but not solitary. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not simply names designating modalities of being. The Divine Persons are distinct from each other in their relations of origins: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” (Lateran Council IV)



The **real distinctions of the Persons of God reside solely in the relationships which relate them to one another**. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, **we believe in one nature or substance**. Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation but one principle—the Church confesses **“one God and Father from whom all things are, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and one Holy Spirit in whom all things are.”**

The **whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine Persons**, without any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.

The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the **entry of God’s creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity**. God designed us to live forever with Him in heaven, being brought into the perfect communion of the Family of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **Summary of Faith found in the Athanasian Creed**

“Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son’s is another, the Holy Spirit’s another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”



*(The Athanasian Creed has been attributed to the teaching of St. Athanasius of Alexandria in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. While scholars disagree about whether he actually wrote this Creed, it is certainly an ancient creedal statement of the Catholic faith)*

#### **Pope Benedict XVI on the Most Holy Trinity:**

“Three Persons who are one God because the Father is love, the Son is love, the Spirit is love. **God is wholly and only love, the purest, infinite and eternal love. He does not live in splendid solitude but rather is an inexhaustible source of life that is ceaselessly given and communicated.**” (June 7, 2009)

## **The Most Holy Trinity in the Prayers of the Mass**

*Sometimes, the best way to grow in understanding of a great mystery of faith through worship, not just from theological statements:*

- 1.** We begin Mass with the **sign of the cross**, naming the 3 Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.
- 2.** The **greeting at Mass** welcomes us in the name of the 3 Divine Persons: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”
- 3.** We sing the **Gloria** and honor God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- 4.** Our **Collect** [opening prayer] concludes with an invocation to the Holy Trinity: “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.”
- 5.** Our recitation of the **Nicene Creed** names our belief in One God, the Father almighty and the one Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- 6.** The **concluding doxology** of the **Eucharistic Prayer**: “Through him [Jesus] and with him and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever. Amen.”
- 7.** At the **concluding blessing**, we hear: “May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”



## **Glory Be**

“Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

## **Act of Faith**

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and died. Amen.

“Three basic truths: God is all-powerful; God has a great love for me; God is faithful to his promises. It is He, the God of mercies, who fills me with confidence. With him, I do not feel alone, or useless, or abandoned, but involved in a plan of salvation that one day will lead to Paradise.”

*Pope John Paul I, Address, September 20, 1978*