



Humans throughout the centuries have come up with all kinds of ideas about God. Hindus believe in many gods – thousands of them. Buddhists believe that God is just one big consciousness into which we are all subsumed when we die. Long ago, Egyptians and Romans believed in many gods, and the Greeks did too. And every culture throughout history has had an idea about God.

So what is going on here? How is it that throughout history there have been so many different notions about God?

Well, the dynamic is this: when God created us in the beginning, He created us for Himself in such a way that our hearts and our minds fit together with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned this “fit” was pulled apart, but humans were still made for God. We have holes in our hearts and in our minds, if you will, that can only fit with God; and even though separated from God after Adam and Eve, humans still longed for Him. In their longing for God, they groped for Him, but in darkness – in the darkness caused by original sin.

So though the centuries – and even today – this groping for God in darkness led humans to make up gods. Because deep down, even in the darkness of original sin, humans know that there is a God. But we humans, on our own power, cannot come to know what God is like. This is why throughout the centuries humans have made up varied and false notions about God.

So God had to show Himself to us. He had to reveal Himself how He truly is. And the first step in the revelation comes, we see, in the Old Testament where God reveals Himself as One. He reveals Himself to Israel and shows them that there are not many gods, but One God who is living and true. Then in the fullness of time God sends His only Son, Jesus; and in and through Jesus, God reveals Himself completely, that He is One God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Throughout the centuries of the Church, the Holy Spirit has deepened the Church’s understanding of the Holy Trinity. This is what we believe: that God is one God, not three, and yet there are three persons in the one God who are equal in majesty. God in the Trinity is perfect life and love within Himself.

We know also that the Son proceeds from the Father, but He does this eternally. In other words, there has never been a time when the Son did not come from the Father – and now

we are getting into things that just don't fit into our small brains – and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son eternally.

The Holy Trinity is a mystery. Our Catholic understanding of mystery doesn't mean that we can't understand it. It means that we can't understand it ALL. God, the Trinity, is infinite. No beginning and no end. One of the great joys of heaven for us will be discovering who God is for eternity.

Our response to the great mystery of who God is should be one of awe and humility, and also one of gratitude because God invites us to share life with Him. We are invited to come into the very heart of the Trinity, into the shared life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We begin even now while on earth. In heaven we will share this life perfectly with God.

Our belief in the Trinity is the most fundamental belief of our faith, the most core belief. If you are asked to explain your faith, start with the Trinity. Explain the infinite love of God which we are invited to share. And this is made possible by Jesus, who died on the cross for us and sent us the Holy Spirit.

**Father Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana  
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