

Holy Trinity Catholic Church
RCIA Class Transcript
Existence of God
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Welcome to our second class. Tonight's topics will be on the Existence of God, the Blessed Trinity, and the Perfections of God.

Before I begin that, though, I think it would be good to just go over the *Sign of the Cross*. Some of you might not be familiar with how to make the Sign of the Cross, even though it's not necessarily just a Catholic thing to do. Many other Christians do also make the Sign of the Cross. It actually ties in very well with the Trinity, because every time we make the Sign of the Cross, it reminds us that we believe in One God, and yet Three Divine Persons. The Sign of the Cross is made by saying "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And notice we say, "In the Name" because there's only One God, and yet we say "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," because there are Three Persons in One God. It's also drawing the invisible Cross upon ourselves, which reminds us that we as Christians believe that Jesus died on the Cross for each one of us. So it's a very beautiful Christian prayer to make the Sign of the Cross. It also reminds us of the fact that the vertical bar represents our love for God, and the horizontal bar represents our love for others. The whole Christian faith can be summarized in "Love of God, and Love of Neighbor." In fact, all the Ten Commandments can be summarized in those two things: Love of God and Love of Neighbor. It's also a neat thing to think about too that the three places that we touch, namely the forehead, the heart, and the shoulders, represent the Blessed Trinity, because we have the Father, and then the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It represents that we should also love God with all of our mind, with all of our heart, and with all of our strength, since the shoulders are a sign of strength. We love God, as the Bible says, with our whole mind, heart, and strength. It really is a beautiful prayer.

Sometimes, for those that aren't Catholic, it might seem a little bit strange making the Sign of the Cross. Some people do it so quickly; it might look like they are swatting flies. So why don't we practice making the Sign of the Cross. It's a very beautiful prayer to say whenever we begin. So we say, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Now if you're Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox, you do it this way: "Father, Son, Holy Spirit," right-to-left. We do it left-to-right. They also have some beautiful symbolism, because what they do is they (Greek Orthodox) place their three fingers together for the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and these two fingers for the two natures in Christ, the Humanity and Divinity. So they say, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." They go right-to-left; we go left-to-right. That's how we make the Sign of the Cross. I think that's sort of a neat way to start our prayers. It's something again; it's not necessarily just a Catholic thing. Many other denominations, many high-church Anglicans and Episcopalians, make the

Sign of the Cross as well. It reminds of so much: our belief in the Unity and the Trinity, our belief in the Divinity of Christ, and that He died on the Cross for each one of us.

Tonight we get into our first topic, which is the Existence of God. And before we do that, I'll just define for you the word "religion," since that's what we're studying here. The word "religion" comes from two Latin words, *Re Ligio*, and these two words mean "to join together" or "to connect us." The "lig" in Latin means a joint or a ligament. In fact, our ligaments in our legs are named after this Latin word which means "a joint". Religion is "what joins us or connects us to God." And that's why we want to delve into religion and study our faith so we can become closer to our God, who made us.

Why are we here? What's the purpose of our life? It can easily be summarized that our purpose in life is "to come to know, love and serve God." And that's what we're doing here tonight. The more we know about God, the more we can love Him, and the more we love Him, the more we want to serve Him, so that we'll be happy forever for all eternity.

Why did God make us? He made us to be perfectly happy with Him for all eternity. God did not need to make us. He did not need to make the human race. God is infinitely perfect and happy in and of Himself. He did not make us because He was lonely or anything like that. God is pure happiness, pure beauty, truth, and goodness. He was not lacking anything. But why did He create us? He created us to share His love with His creatures, so that He could make us, and that one day we would be forever in Heaven with Him for all eternity. Our destiny, our purpose in life is happiness, perfect happiness with God in Heaven.

Well, how do we get there? Very easy. By coming to know God, love God, and serve Him in this life, so we can be perfectly happy with Him for all eternity in the next life. All of us are made for God. St. Augustine said that, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God." All of us have this great longing for happiness, but it can never be fully satisfied in this world. People try to satisfy their desire for happiness in seeking different pleasures of this world. Some people try to seek their happiness through money, drugs, alcohol, or possessions. But all of those things will come up empty in our lives. They will never satisfy the deepest longing of the human heart, which is to see God face-to-face, the Beatific Vision. To see God in Heaven will make us perfectly happy, and only then will we have complete and perfect happiness.

This is why God made us. Religion is so important, because it is what enables us to be joined and connected to God. We're created for happiness. There's no lasting happiness in this changing world. Again, Augustine said, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." It was funny as I was thinking about this. I was driving in my car and a Springsteen song came on, "Hungry Heart", where it says, "Everybody has a hungry heart."

Do you know that song? Well, it's the same idea. People search for happiness and love, but only God can fulfill that.

Let us look into the Existence of God. How can we explain the Existence of God especially to unbelievers or agnostics? Well, sometimes you'll meet people that call themselves *atheists*, and an atheist is somebody who denies the existence of God. The word *theo* in Latin and in Greek is God. An atheist means "one who does not believe in God." An *agnostic* is one who's not sure. The word *knosis* means knowledge. An agnostic means "one who is without knowledge," or "one who doesn't know whether or not God exists." Often times you will meet, in America I think about five percent of the population considers themselves to be atheists or agnostics, which of course means that 95 percent of our country is a God-believing society.

We have agnostics and atheists. How do we explain to them our belief that God exists, that we believe in a Supreme Being, a Supreme God who is in Heaven, who created all things? Well, before we get into that, let me just describe what our definition of God is. Perhaps the best definition says that God is the Supreme Being, infinitely perfect, who made all things and keeps all things in existence. Not only did God make all things, but He keeps everything in existence. We call this *Creation and Conservation*. See, if God for a split second decided not to think about something, or forgot to think about something, it would cease to exist. It would be annihilated. It would go back into oblivion. If God, for an instant, forgot to hold this pulpit in existence, the papers would fall to the floor. If for a moment, He forgot to hold you in existence, you would disappear and be annihilated. So that's how much God loves us, that He keeps every one of us in existence. He not only creates, but He conserves all Creation, and keeps it always in His loving thoughts.

It's also interesting that in my notes here I have a comment that really everybody, I believe, in their heart of hearts does believe in the existence of God. According to one study, I read that anybody, who was ever asked in a lie detector test whether or not you believed in God, always answered that in their heart they did believe in God. Even if they said no, the lie detector said they were lying. So, I've never known of a case that contradicted that.

Now, God is the Supreme Being. And we know that He is pure spirit. See, you and I are made up of body and spirit. We have a body, but we also have a soul, where God does not have a body. He's pure spirit. In that way, God is neither male nor female. Now, we call God "Father," because Jesus said, "When you pray, say 'Our Father, who art in Heaven.'" But God as God is pure spirit. He's neither male nor female. He's a pure Being of love, essence, and existence. He's neither male nor female, because it's the human body that determines male or female. But God as God is pure spirit. In the hierarchy of Creation, God of course is pure spirit. He's uncreated. He always did exist, and He always will exist. He never had a beginning.

Underneath Him are Angels. Angels, which we'll talk about next week, are pure spirits as well, but they're created. At one time they did not exist, and God created them. They will also live forever.

Then you have mankind. Man and woman are both body and soul, or body and spirit. At one time, we did not exist. God created us, but we also will live forever. Our bodies will die and go back to the earth, be cremated, or disintegrate or be buried; but our spirits, our souls, will live forever. So, from that standpoint we are immortal, and we will live forever.

And then, underneath that are animals, the plants and then minerals and other things. Now, this is the hierarchy. God is pure spirit. He always has existed, and always will exist. He even said to Moses, when Moses asked Him in the Book of Exodus 3:14, Moses said, "Who are you?" God's answer was, "I am who Am." In other words, I am pure existence. I always have existed, and always will exist. And they say you can tell that God is not from the Deep South, because He didn't say, "I is who I Is." He said, "I am who Am." He's from the North, apparently! So, God is who He is, because He will always be. He always was, and He is and always will be.

Now, we believe that God is infinitely perfect, without any limits. He's unchangeable. He is infinite, and His perfections, as we'll talk about, that He's eternal, He's all-good, He's all-knowing, He's all-present, and He's almighty.

Before we go into those perfections, one at a time, and spend a few minutes on each of them, take out the handout that you got today, and I want to go through that with you. It's the handout that says "How Do I Know God Exists?" and it is part two. Hopefully all of you found that.

There are different proofs for the existence of God. These are very good to share with people who might not believe in the existence of God. Now we know that we can discover the existence of God, not only because God revealed Himself to us, but even without God revealing Himself to us, we can come, through the light of natural reason, to know that God exists. The first way, from the handout, is called the *Argument by Design*. It talks here about a Catholic and an atheist working together in a car factory. The Catholic says, "Isn't it great that a new car came together by accident." The atheist protests, "What do you mean, accident? There are many years of research, design, computers, and craftsmanship built into that car." The Catholic said, "Then by what logic do you conclude that the universe, which is much more advanced, is an accident? The intelligence of the design points to the intelligence of the Designer, namely God." That's what's considered the first argument for the Existence of God, the beauty of the created world. The pagan Cicero, who lived long before Christ, said, "When we contemplate the heavens, we arrive at the conviction that they are all guided by a Being of surpassing skill." That was a pagan who said that, before the time of Christ. He

said, "By gazing upon the heavens, we can be convinced that there must be a Creator, a Being of surpassing skill."

There was an interesting example with an astronomer named Kurtcher, who had a friend who denied the existence of God. One day during a visit, Kurtcher's friend saw a globe in his study that was hand-carved. He said, "That's an incredibly beautiful and interesting globe. Who made it?" And Kurtcher the astronomer said, "Nobody – it just made itself." And then he gave his friend a little elbow in the side, and he said the friend had a hearty laugh at the idea. But Kurtcher the scientist asserted, "It'll be much easier for a little globe like that to make itself than for the immense globe of the Earth to create itself." Common sense tells us that if you see a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, maybe like this podium or a globe, if somebody had to make that, and that is rather simple, compared to the Earth, then a conscious, intelligent Being must have made the larger globe, which we call the Earth.

Another example is, taking a look at your watch, and you can see how the second hand moves around, and the minute hand, and when you see this, you know that there must have been somebody intelligent to create something like the watch. But what about the planets going around the sun? It would make sense that, if we believe that something intelligent made something as simple as a watch, that an intelligent creator would have certainly had to make something as complex as the galaxy, solar system, the planets, and the sun. There's a saying that says when we see the footprints in the sand, we can conclude that somebody has passed that way. The universe is filled with footprints of our Supreme Creator. Even a candle cannot light itself – it has to be lit. What about the sun? Who created the sun? Who lit and ignited the sun countless thousands or tens of thousands of years ago? So by looking at our created world, we can conclude that since there is Creation, there must be a Creator. Since there's the beauty and design of Creation, there must be an intelligent Creator behind it.

The second argument here is an *Argument from Dependency*. It says everything that exists must have either come from itself, or from something else. Since all things we see in nature are not self-causing beings, there must ultimately be a Being which depends only upon Himself. This is called the Argument of the First Cause, or the Uncaused Cause. If you go back far enough, we come from our parents, they came from their parents, they came from their parents, all the way back to our first parents, Adam and Eve. Well where did they come from? And even if people hope well, they came from some other form of life, well, where did that life come from? And they keep going back further and further and further, there must at the beginning be something that existed from all eternity that brought everything into existence, the Uncaused Cause as they say. We're all dependent upon others, and of course, there has to be something, a Being that existed from all eternity, that is responsible for our created world.

Then there's the *Argument from Conscience*. It says everyone who uses reason recognizes there is a Universal Moral Law; it's called the Law Written on our Hearts, Natural Law. It is good to do some things, such as feed the poor; and bad to do others, such as kill the innocent. Everybody in their heart knows that there is right and wrong. The moral law, we recognize it, but we did not create it. It points to a Creator of the moral law, known as the Lawgiver. If there are natural laws in our heart, then there must be a Lawgiver who gave us those laws. If our conscience tells us what's right and wrong, there must be somebody who helped to give us a conscience so that we know that there is a Supreme Lawgiver. It says by our conscience we can distinguish right from wrong. Our conscience approves the right and condemns the wrong. Thus within ourselves, there is recognition of a Supreme Lawgiver to whom we are responsible.

Then of course, I think my favorite one is *Pascal's Wager*. This is the *Gambler's Argument for God*. It says if there were only two lottery tickets left, one of which was a certain winner, and you had the option to buy one, would it be a wise investment to spend one dollar to win a million, with 50/50 odds? Isn't it better to risk losing a dollar? We're all committed to place a bet on whether God exists or not. If we choose not to believe in God, then we place our bet on lesser odds. If God does not exist, we will never know we made a mistake. If God does exist, and we act against Him, we will lose eternal happiness. Whatever we have to give up for our belief in God, we know to be a temporary thing anyway. We will lose these things forever, either way. However, if we gamble our life on God's non-existence, and He does turn out to exist, we have given up an eternal thing and lost Heaven forever. The safer bet is on God's existence. The odds are in our favor. Isn't it better to risk losing a dollar, some of the world's pleasures, for a chance to win a million, which is eternal paradise? That's called Pascal's Wager.

It really is an interesting thing to speculate, because as a Christian we cannot lose, and an atheist cannot win. Let's say the atheist is right, and there is no God. Well, the atheist is never going to know that he or she was right, because they're dead, and there's no eternal life. However, if the atheist is wrong, and if there turns out to be a God and a Heaven and a Hell, then the atheist will have to know for all eternity that he or she was wrong. Whereas, we as Christians, if we're right, we will know for all eternity that we were right, because we'll have eternal happiness in Heaven. If we're wrong, and it turns out not to be a God, and nothing after this life, and we just get buried in a grave, and that's it, we'll never know that we were wrong. A Christian cannot lose, and an atheist can't win. It doesn't make sense, according to Pascal's Wager; it's not worth the bet. It makes much better sense to live your life in the belief in the existence of God, because if you are right, then the rewards are eternal. If you're wrong, of course, the punishment is eternal as well.

Next is the *Purpose of Life Argument*. Life does not have a sufficient purpose worthy of the dignity of man, except with God. Only with God's existence, does life make sense. Without God, life is absurd, and has no sufficient purpose or

meaning. This is why suicides abound among those who reject God. It is only the Deep Purpose of God that man can find the true and adequate reason to live. It is called the Existentialist Argument. Only God gives man the dignity and purpose that he has of being a human being made in the image and likeness of God.

Now besides those reasons, there's also what we would call Reasons from History that would point to the existence of God. Namely, that God has decided to reveal Himself to us. See, these ways I just talked about (Design, Dependency, Conscience, Pascal's Wager, and the Purpose of Life) are all just natural reasons why we believe in God. But what about Divine Revelation? How do we know that God exists? Well namely, He revealed Himself to us. He revealed Himself to us on Mt. Sinai to Moses, when He said, "I Am who Am." Also, in the Old Testament God worked countless miracles – the crossing of the Red Sea, the feeding of the people with the manna in the desert, and then of course Christ came along, and Christ revealed the Heavenly Father to us. Christ worked countless miracles – He raised people from the dead, He raised Himself from the dead. And then we also have the other arguments from history, namely the lives of the saints, and miracles that have occurred in the last 2000 years – saint's bodies who have never corrupted, Eucharistic miracles, apparitions of the Blessed Mother. All these historical evidences help support our belief in the existence of God.

The last way that we can come to know God is our own experience. This would be in prayer. And it's so true that if you talk to people, they know that God exists, because why? Because God has answered their prayers. They have prayed; they have experienced God in their life. They know, in their heart of hearts, that God exists. Besides all the reasons from Natural Law, and besides God's Divine Revelation, we can also know that He exists from our own experience of our prayer life, and God working in our life, sometimes in a miraculous way, to bring about our conversion or to lead us to where God wants us to go.

Let's talk now for a few minutes about the Unity of God; then we'll cover the Trinity. We as Christians believe that there's only One God, and we're not polytheists. From that standpoint, we have a lot in common with the Jews and the Muslims, who believe in one God. There are other religions out there that believe in many gods, but we as Christians only believe in One God. And yet, we know that God has revealed that He is actually Three Divine Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To understand the Trinity, we have to realize that this is not something we could have figured out on our own – that we could know, for example, the existence of God from the light of natural reason, but we could never know that God is three Divine Persons. The word that the Church came up with to describe this reality is The Trinity, meaning three in one. It really is, what we call a mystery. What is a mystery? A mystery is not a puzzle; it's not a riddle. A mystery is not something we can't understand anything about. A mystery is

something that we can continue to learn and study for the rest of our lives, and never fully comprehend the totality of it.

A number of years ago, when bishops came out to parishes to do Confirmations, they would ask the kids questions, and they would call on you and say, "Name me the seven Sacraments." The kids were scared to death that the Bishop was going to call on them. One day the Bishop came and said, "Johnny, define for me the Blessed Trinity." And little Johnny said, "Three in One, and One in Three." The Bishop scratched his head and said, "I don't understand." And little Johnny says, "You're not supposed to Bishop; it's a mystery!" That's a true story. There was actually once a man, who was on death row, and the priest came to visit him to try to help him make his peace with God, and he said to him, "Do you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?" He says, "Father, here I am about to die, and you ask me riddles!" Of course, it's not a riddle, it's not a puzzle. The Trinity is a mystery. It means One God, and this One God has Three Divine Persons. Now again, it's not something we could have figured out. It had to be revealed to us.

There are some places in the Old Testament where God reveals Himself to us as three. But it wasn't until the New Testament that it was clearly shown. For example, there are a few passages in the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis, God says, "Let Us make man in Our own Image." Now "Us" is plural, "Our" is plural, but "Image" is singular. There's One God, and yet God is Three. God said, "Let Us make man in Our own Image." He didn't say "Images." He said, "Let Us make man in Our own Image." The Jews of the Old Testament never understood that God was three Divine Persons.

It was only in Christ that this became very clear to the people of the New Testament. Does anybody know who the first person was that found out that God was the Blessed Trinity, that there are actually Three Persons in One God? Anybody want to take a guess? Who do you think would be the first person to find out? That's right, Mary! The Blessed Mother was the first one ever to be told about the Trinity, and that was at The Annunciation, in Luke Chapter 1. The Angel Gabriel came to Mary and asked her to be the Mother of the Messiah. And what did he say? He said that if she was willing, the Holy Spirit would come upon her, the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and the Child to be born would be the Son of God. So he said, "The Holy Spirit would come upon you, the Power of the Most High" (which is God the Father), "will overshadow you, and the Child to be born would be called the Son of God." Mary was only maybe 14 or 16 years of age, and yet this incredible reality, of the Blessed Trinity, was revealed to her. Mary said, "Yes," and God the Son became Incarnate within her womb. She truly became the Mother of God. Remember, the Holy Spirit is God, the Father is God, and the Son is God. And yet, there's only One God.

Some of the ways I would like to explain The Blessed Trinity, is sometimes kids will say to me, "Well Father, it doesn't make sense because how can God be

One and yet Three, because one plus one plus one is three.” Well the way I answer that is, “Well, what’s one times one times one?” The answer’s one. So God is One. Yes, there are Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and yet there’s only One God. A neat way to explain it was St. Patrick, way back about 1500 years ago, explained The Blessed Trinity by using the three-leafed clover, the shamrock. He said, “You have one plant, and yet three leaves. That’s one way to describe the Trinity.” Other people have described the Trinity as a family. If you have a family, you have a mom, a dad, and a baby. They’re one family, yet three distinct persons. Of course, the only difference is that in the family, there are three persons with three different human natures. In God, there are Three Divine Persons, but only One Divine Nature. So, there’s only One God, One Being, One Essence, One Nature, and yet there are Three Persons.

Nature answers the question “What.” Person answers the question “Who.” So, God is One Being, One Essence, One Substance, One Nature, and yet He is Three Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The other way I like to describe it, especially to the teenagers and to the kids, is to show how three can also be one. They say, “Well Father, how can that be, you know, if you have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It sounds to me like there are Three Gods.” No, there’s only One God. And I say, “Well, what is water?” And they say, “Water is H₂O.” I said, “Well, what is ice?” They say, “Ice is H₂O.” I said, “What is steam?” They say, “Steam is H₂O.” H₂O, they’re all water, right? And really they’re all the same. Ice, water, and steam are all one substance. And yet, they are distinct; so God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and yet, One God. It’s a mystery, like I said. It’s not easy to comprehend, but there are ways that we can look at it. Sometimes people have used the analogy that if a man is a husband, a father, and a son, there are three different relationships; yet he’s one person. He’s a father. He’s a son to his parents, but he’s also a spouse. Now, the problem with that is that that’s actually a heresy, called Modalism, of saying there’s only One person in God, and yet He has three different manifestations of three different relationships. But that’s just another example of how three can also be one. The problem with that is that God is Three Persons, not One Person with three different modes. He’s Three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There are all sorts of different symbols. You have the three interlocking rings, which symbolizes God – namely, that they’re all One and joined, and yet they are distinct. We know that we have the Father, we have the Son, and we have the Holy Spirit, and yet they are One God. Now, the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. From all eternity, the Father begets the Son. And from all eternity, the Son is begotten from the Father. There was never a time that the Son did not exist. God the Son always existed from all eternity. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. We call this “*generation*” – the Father generated the Son from all eternity. The love between the Father and the Son is

the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. There was never a time when the Holy Spirit did not exist.

The Father is eternal; the Son is eternal; and the Holy Spirit is eternal. It's really a community of love, a family of love. So the Father begets the Son; in generation the Son loves the Father, and their bond of love is so intense; it's actually a person. In some respects you can compare it to a family – the love between husband and wife is so incredible that it begets new life, a child, which is the love between a mother and a father. Isn't a baby the love between husband and wife? The Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. The difference is that the Holy Spirit always existed. The Son always existed. The Father always existed. But the Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is not the Son; the Holy Spirit is not the Father. They are distinct Persons, and yet they are One Being, One Essence, One God.

I did draw another diagram up here on the board. This is an image. Just maybe one way to understand the Trinity – you have the triangle with three equal sides, realizing that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equal. They're all God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and yet One God, the three sides of one triangle – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Spirit is God. There's only One God. We're monotheists, like the Jewish people and the Muslim people, who believe in One God. And yet, we know that the Father is not the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father, or the Son. The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit. There are three distinct Persons, and yet One God.

As I mentioned, we would not have been able to figure this out on our own. God had to reveal this to us. Another passage in the Old Testament, where we get a little bit of a glimpse of the Blessed Trinity, is when God says, "Behold, the man has become like One of Us, knowing good and evil." God is talking to Himself. "Behold the man", namely Adam, "has become like One of Us, knowing good and evil." Again, that plural pronoun can give a little bit of a glimpse of the Trinity. There are many other passages in the New Testament that show that God is a Trinity. We have Jesus saying in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." It is very clear. Name is singular, but in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In John 15:26 Jesus says, "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness concerning me." So, Jesus is speaking. He says when the Advocate (who is the Holy Spirit) comes, whom I will send from the Father (there's the Father), the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me, namely the Son of God.

Another very good point is when Jesus was baptized. When the Lord came up out of the Jordan River, it said that the Heavens opened. The Holy Spirit came

down in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father said, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." So, you have Christ, coming out of the water; He's the Son of God; the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father. That was the first public manifestation of the Blessed Trinity in Scripture, because John the Baptist saw that, probably people in the crowd saw that, so that's where the Blessed Trinity was revealed in a magnificent way, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Another place was at the Transfiguration. Has everybody heard of the Transfiguration? Jesus went up on Mt. Tabor and was transfigured before the Apostles. It says that the cloud (you have Jesus on the mountain top) of God hovered over Jesus, and then the Voice came from the Heavens – "This is My Beloved Son, listen to Him." So again, the Trinity was manifested at the Transfiguration, as well as the Baptism of the Lord.

There's also another place where Jesus first gets up to speak in the synagogue in Nazareth, and He quotes the ancient prophet Isaiah. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Here you go; the Holy Spirit of the Lord is upon Me – the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son. These are some of the other passages in the New Testament.

But one of the clearest ones is the one where Jesus sends his Apostles out and He says, "Go baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit." That clearly shows that there is a belief in the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now, we profess this belief in the Trinity every time we make the Sign of the Cross, as I mentioned. And every time we say a prayer called the Doxology. *Dox* in Greek means "glory," to "give glory to God." All of us know this prayer as the "Glory Be": *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit - that's called the Doxology, the praise of God. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.* This refers to the eternity of God. *As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be...*

(A question). Sometimes when people say the Glory Be they say "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit," some people make the Sign of the Cross. It's optional, you don't have to do it, but I think it maybe helps some people's prayer life. That's a nice devotional act; it's not required. But it is a good idea to make the Sign of the Cross when you begin your prayers and end your prayers, like Grace before Meals or Grace after Meals. The Sign of the Cross is good because it helps to focus us – it gets our attention. And, plus the Devil doesn't like it because you're drawing the Cross on us. The Sign of the Cross, if you have seen any of the "Exorcist" movies over the years, you know that the Cross is a sign of power, because Christ conquered by the Sign of the Cross. It's why people should wear a Cross around their neck. They should wear a Crucifix, because once they're blessed by a priest there's certain grace that's attached to it, or power or strength and the evil one, the devil, doesn't like that. It's the Sign

of the Cross that scares the evil one, because Jesus died on the Cross for our salvation. You should have a crucifix or cross in your home, and every time you make the Sign of the Cross, especially with Holy Water, when you bless yourself, it's a sign of protection. It's like a shield against the forces of evil, against the Devil and the fallen Angels.

Just to go a little bit deeper into the Trinity, just for a moment, I would say that there are a couple of good quotes here. Let me read you that one way to understand ...

(Note: at this point, the side A of the recording ended and was silent for a time. It resumes below).

... Himself, which is His own image. So, just to confuse you a little bit more, God knows Himself from all eternity. And His self-knowledge, His knowledge of Himself, is His own Image. It says this is not a mere thought, as our knowledge of ourselves would be, but God's knowledge of Himself is a living person, of the same substance and One with the Father. This knowledge that God has of Himself is the Son of God. So, the Son of God always existed because the Father always had knowledge of Himself, and His knowledge of Himself is the Son. An analogy would be when you look at yourself in a mirror, you see the perfect image of yourself. That's what God saw when God contemplated Himself. He saw His perfect Image. And the love between Himself and the Image of Himself, which is the Son, was and is the Holy Spirit, which is the bond of love, the Spirit. The word *spirit* in Hebrew is *ruah*, which means "the breath, the sigh," the sigh of love between the Father and the Son. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the love between the Father and the Son. When the Father saw the Son, the love between them, that sigh of love, that yearning, that incredible bond was so divine; it actually was a person, the Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Father begets the Son, the Divine Word, the Wisdom of the Father. God the Father, seeing His own image in the Son, loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father from all eternity. From their mutual love is breathed forth, as it were, a living person, one with them, and of their own substance. This is God the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Ghost, the spirit of love, proceeds from the Father and the Son. Again, it's a wonderful thing to meditate upon and to contemplate. And that's why it's a mystery, because you can think about this for your whole life, and never fully say yes, I have plumbed the depths of this topic.

Now, sometimes people call the Holy Spirit the Holy Ghost. That was the title, usually before Vatican II, and either one is acceptable, Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. Ghost comes from the German word *geist*, which means "spirit." And then, *spiritus* is the Latin word which we get "spirit" from.

So, if you call the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit; that's using the Latin origin. If you call Him the Holy Ghost; that's the German origin. Either one is fine. I think after Vatican II, with a lot of the people talking about ghosts, and Casper the Friendly

Ghost and all sorts of things, the Church wanted to move away from the word ghost because little kids didn't understand it. They thought it was something spooky. And so the use of Holy Spirit became more common and more popular.

Let's just end tonight, in the last few minutes here, in talking about the Perfections of God, and I'll list the major Perfections of God. The first one, of course, is God is eternal. He never had a beginning. If you want to really confuse a child, they say, "Who made us?" and we say, "God"; and they say, "Who made God?" and we say, "Nobody – He always existed." It will baffle them. They just can't comprehend that, because it's hard for them. It's hard for us to imagine that a Being existed from all eternity. He always was, He is now and always will be. We're reminded of that every time we pray the Glory Be – "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." So God is eternal. He always was, and He always remains the same. God had no beginning. There never was a time when there was no God. God can never cease to exist. He will have no end. He will be living and immortal.

Secondly, God is all-good. God isn't just good; He is Goodness itself. He is infinitely loveable in Himself, and His Fatherly love is manifested to us through Christ, His Son. So it is out of goodness that God created the angels and the human race. Again, He had no need of us. God was perfectly happy in and of Himself, but He wanted us to experience eternal happiness with Him. He wanted to share His love. And just as when something good happens to you, like if you win the lottery, you want to share that hopefully, right, with the Church. If God gives you blessings, you want to share that. And so God wanted to share His happiness. That's why He created the angels and us. But of course He also gave us free will, which we'll talk about later, about how people can turn against God.

The next perfection of God is God is *omniscient*, which means all-knowing. "Om" means all. *Scio* is the Latin word for knowledge. So God is omniscient; He knows everything - past, present, and future, even our most secret thoughts, words and deeds. God knows everything. People will sometimes then ask, "Well, how can we have free will if God knows exactly what we're going to do in the future?" And the answer is God's foreknowledge is not pre-determination. Even though God knows what choices we're going to make in the future, that does not force us to act that way. We are still 100% truly free creatures. God knows what we're going to have for breakfast tomorrow morning, but His knowledge of that does not force us to have Wheaties instead of Corn Flakes. That's our free will. That's our free choice of what we're going to have for breakfast: bacon or eggs or fruit. We choose freely, but does God know what we're going to have for breakfast tomorrow? Of course He does. Otherwise He wouldn't be God.

Does God's knowledge force us to act that way? Not at all. God knows, but His knowledge does not force us to act that way. One analogy would be the weatherman can look at the maps, and he can see the tornado or the hurricane is coming up a certain path. Well, just because he sees this doesn't mean the

weatherman is causing it to go in that direction. Other analogies would be, sometimes you might be standing up on a mountain and you're looking down at a train coming around this way around this bend, and another train coming this way around this bend. You can see from your perspective that they're going to crash in about ten minutes; but they don't know that, because they cannot see, whereas God is outside of Time. He can see what is going to happen, but His foreknowledge of that event does not predetermine that that event must occur. We still have 100% free will, even though God does know. For example, He knows who is going to eventually wind up in Heaven and who is going to wind up in Hell. Does God know that? Of course He does. Otherwise He wouldn't be God. But does His foreknowledge mean that the person will be forced to go in that direction? Not at all – the person has free will.

Then, God is *omnipresent*, which means God is everywhere. There is no place where God is not. We're not pantheists; we don't say "God is in that tree." We don't worship a tree. But, are we always in the presence of God? The answer is yes. If you go to Hawaii, are you in the presence of God? Yes. If you go to the Antarctic or the Arctic is God there? The answer is yes. And, there is never a place we could go that is apart from God. God is everywhere. We're always in the presence of God. Although God is everywhere, we do not see Him because He is a spirit and cannot be seen with our eyes.

And then, God is *omnipotent*. This means God is almighty. He can do all things. And of course, God is also all-wise, all-holy, all-merciful, and all-just. And you might ask, "Well, how can that be? How can God be 100% merciful? How can He be all-merciful as well as all-just? Isn't that contradictory?" Well, an analogy would be the ocean. I mean, can you say the ocean is rough, and also smooth - of course, in different places. You know, is the ocean deep? Yes. Is it shallow? Yes. Is it cold? Is it warm? If the ocean, which is finite, can have all these different qualities, so God can also be perfectly merciful and perfectly just as well. One priest said that while we're alive, God is merciful. And after death, He shows His justice. So God is merciful to us, thank God, but He's also perfectly just. And He's also infinitely holy in and of Himself.

(A question). If God knows what's going to happen, why doesn't He stop bad people from doing bad things? That's a great question, and I will answer it. I'll give you here the short answer now, and we'll have a whole class on "The Meaning of Suffering – Why Does God Allow Suffering?" Because there are different kinds of sufferings – there are natural disasters like tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Then there are, I guess what we call human tragedies – like terrorism and wars, and then there are illnesses and diseases. Why didn't God stop the terrorists from flying the planes into the World Trade Center? I mean, that's a very good question, a very legitimate question. The short answer is that for God to stop these bad things from happening, He would have to take away free will, is the short answer. That God created all of us with freedom, the freedom to be able to do good or to do evil, to help people or to hurt

people. You have people in our society like Mother Teresa, whose presence in this world has been a great blessing. We've also had the Hitlers and the Stalins and the Mussolinis and people like that. If God were to stop these bad things from happening, He would have to take away our free will. So, to eliminate suffering, He would have to make us all robots. He would have to take away our free will and our freedom, which means He'd be taking away the responsibility He gave to us. Now God sometimes does work miracles, and He does, you know, stop obviously some bad things from happening. But generally He does not want to take away the greatest gift He gave us, which is our freedom. Unfortunately with freedom comes responsibility, and good causes, good effects or bad effects come from the choices a human being makes. So the short answer is that He doesn't want to violate our freedom, our free will and our choice.

(A question). If God knows everything, and we also have free will, is everything preordained? The answer is no. It's not preordained. We're not predetermined to act in a certain way. Again it's a mystery, but we are 100% free to act in the way we do. But God also knows what choices we're going to make. For example, I have this eraser, and I have a free will. I can either drop it on the floor, or place it on the podium. From all eternity, God knows what choice I am going to make – drop it or place it. But I'm completely free to do one or the other (drops the eraser). See, God knew from all eternity I was going to drop it, but I was completely free. I could have just as easily put it back here. So His foreknowledge, His omniscience, does not predetermine our actions.

(A question). Say for instance somebody has a bad habit, and it's something they do every time they see a certain person, they yell at them or get upset with them, and they pray for God's help in that. Does He know the next time we're going to yell if we ask for His guidance? Does He then effectively ask Him to affect free will, or are we still choosing to behave a certain way until He intercedes? When we pray (in two weeks we'll have a whole class on prayer, and we'll get into that topic on "Why Should We Pray?") what are the effects of prayer? Can we be helped? Can we be changed when we pray, and can things change when we pray? So, what we're praying for is the grace to be better people, the grace not to yell at that person. I know it's not a personal example, I'm aware of that. Obviously, He wants us to pray so that we can receive the graces to be better and to overcome bad habits, for example, yelling at a particular person. So your question is, "Does God intercede His free will?" Well, it's not interfering with our free will. What He does though, He gives us grace (and we're going to have a whole class on grace, which is strength and power from God to be able to rise above human weakness and to live a more God-like or Christ-like life). It's a wonderful question, and when we pray, for example, God can give somebody the grace to overcome drug addiction, alcoholism, and all sorts of immorality. Today's feast day is the feast day of St. Matthew, who was a tax collector and sinner. Jesus called him, and he became a saint. We have examples throughout history of people who God's grace did transform. But grace doesn't violate the free will. We're still free, but when we receive God's grace, we can then

cooperate with the grace He's given us, and then we can receive the power and the strength to change our lives. God's grace is a free gift that we can pray for and it can strengthen our will, and it can help to inspire us and to motivate us to act in a different way. So it's a great topic. We'll have a whole class on grace coming up. But suffice it to say God's grace does not violate our free will, but when we cooperate with God's grace, we can do things we could not do of our own human ability.

(A question). I find whenever I pray for something or about something, I'm not necessarily asking for a specific outcome, but rather asking for God to give me the grace or whatever to accept His will. What's the more correct thing to be doing – to be praying for what you think you want to happen, or to be able to accept what does happen? I would say that the greater spiritual development is when we pray, "Lord, You know what's best; Your will be done. I'd like it if You did it my way. But, Lord, You're God. I'm a mere human being with a brain the size of a pea, and you're God. You're all-wise and all-knowledgeable. You know what's best for me, Lord. Thy will be done." That's really the best prayer. Now you can pray for specific things like "Lord, help heal my son; heal my daughter, bring my grandchild back to the Faith..." You can pray and you should pray for specific things. There's nothing wrong with that. Say "Lord, in Your time and if Your will be done." That is, I think, the more spiritually mature way to pray... Thy will be done.