

— TEACHER'S MANUAL —

# The Blessed Trinity

## and Our Christian Vocation



Author and General Editor: Rev. James Socias



MIDWEST THEOLOGICAL FORUM

Woodridge, Illinois



# CONTENTS

|      |  |     |   |
|------|--|-----|---|
| ix   | <b>Abbreviations Used for the Books of the Bible</b> | 16  | <i>Sidebar: St. Jerome, The Passionate Scholar</i>      |
| ix   | <b>General Abbreviations</b>                         | 17  | Christ Is Present in Our Prayer                         |
| x    | <b>Foreword</b>                                      | 18  | Christ Is Present in His Followers                      |
| xi   | <b>Overview</b>                                      | 18  | Effects of the Encounter                                |
| T171 | <b>Catholic Prayers and Devotions</b>                | 19  | <i>Sidebar: Are You Blind, Like Bartimaeus?</i>         |
| T179 | <b>Art and Photo Credits</b>                         | 21  | The Beginning of Faith                                  |
| T183 | <b>Index</b>   | 21  | Faith in God Is Received from Others and for Others     |
| 1    | <b>Chapter 1:<br/>Faith and Revelation</b>           | 22  | <i>Sidebar: Faith Calls . . .</i>                       |
| 1a   | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>                        | 23  | Faith Is Verified by Our Personal Experience            |
| 1e   | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>                            | 23  | Faith Comes Alive when Lived in Communion               |
| 1e   | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>                          | 24  | A Faith Professed                                       |
| 1f   | <i>Key Ideas</i>                                     | 24  | The Deposit of Faith                                    |
| 3    | Introduction   | 24  | Sacred Tradition  |
| 4    | Man in Search of God                                 | 25  | Sacred Scripture  |
| 4    | <i>Sidebar: The Human Desire to Know God</i>         | 25  | Sacred Scripture Is Inspired                            |
| 5    | <i>Sidebar: Do You Know, or Do You Really Know?</i>  | 26  | <i>Sidebar: How the Bible Came to Be</i>                |
| 6    | God in Search of Man                                 | 28  | Sacred Scripture Is Inerrant                            |
| 7    | Where Can God Be Found?                              | 28  | The Magisterium   |
| 7    | Certainty of Truth Is Only Given by Faith            | 29  | <i>Sidebar: The Apocryphal Books of the Bible</i>       |
| 8    | The Human Heart Is Satisfied by God Alone            | 30  | <i>Sidebar: Bible Translations: The Word in Words</i>   |
| 8    | Reasoning God's Existence                            | 31  | Conclusion  |
| 9    | <i>Sidebar: Not Such a "Dumb Ox" After All</i>       | 32  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>                            |
| 9    | St. Thomas Aquinas on Reason                         | 35  | <i>Vocabulary</i>                                       |
| 9    | The First Mover                                      | 37  | <i>Study Questions</i>                                  |
| 10   | The First Cause                                      | 38  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>                              |
| 10   | The Grand Architect                                  | 39  | <i>From the Catechism</i>                               |
| 11   | Limitations of Human Reason                          | 43  | <b>Chapter 2:<br/>Understanding the Trinity</b>         |
| 11   | <i>Sidebar: Seeing God Face-to-Face</i>              | 43a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>                           |
| 12   | Revelation   | 43c | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>                               |
| 12   | Divine Revelation in the Old Testament               | 43c | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>                             |
| 12   | Jesus as the Ultimate Truth of Revelation            | 43d | <i>Key Ideas</i>  |
| 13   | An Encounter with Jesus Christ                       | 44  | Introduction  |
| 14   | How Christ Is Present Among Us                       | 46  | <b>Part I: Getting to Know God</b>                      |
| 14   | Christ Is Present in His Church                      | 46  | God's People, God's Covenants                           |
| 14   | Christ Is Present in His Sacraments                  | 47  | <i>Sidebar: Abraham, Our Father in Faith</i>            |
| 15   | <i>Sidebar: Christ Present in the Liturgy</i>        | 48  | The Name of "YHWH"                                      |
| 16   | Christ Is Present in His Word                        | 49  | <i>Sidebar: God Reveals His Name to Moses</i>           |
|      |  | 50  | Attributes of God                                       |
|      |  | 50  | God Is Perfect  |
|      |  | 52  | God Is Pure Spirit                                      |
|      |  | 52  | <i>Sidebar: Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist</i> |
|      |  | 53  | God Is Immutable (Unchanging)                           |



|     |   |      |   |
|-----|---|------|---|
| 54  | God Is Eternal  | 90   | God the Creator   |
| 54  | God Is Omnibenevolent (All-Loving)                                | 92   | Why Did God Create the Universe and Human Beings?                         |
| 54  | God Is Omniscient (All-Knowing)                                   | 93   | The Beginning of Creation   |
| 55  | <i>Sidebar: The Problem of Evil</i>                               | 94   | <i>Sidebar: Creation and Evolution</i>                                    |
| 56  | God Is Omnipotent (All-Powerful)                                  | 95   | God Created a World that Is Good  |
| 56  | God Is Omnipresent (Present Everywhere)                           | 95   | Preservation, Providence, and Government                                  |
| 57  | <b>Part II: God as a Trinity of Persons</b>                       | 96   | <i>Sidebar: The Sacrament of Marriage</i>                                 |
| 57  | Understanding Three-in-One  | 97   | Angels  |
| 58  | The Language of the Trinity                                       | 98   | <i>Sidebar: Hierarchy of Angels</i>                                       |
| 58  | The Trinity Is One God in Three Divine Persons                    | 99   | The Fall of the Angels  |
| 58  | The Trinity Is of One “Substance” or Nature                       | 101  | The Ministry of Angels  |
| 59  | St. Patrick: the “Apostle of Ireland”                             | 101  | <i>Sidebar: Guardian Angel Prayer</i>                                     |
| 60  | The Trinity Revealed  | 102  | God Creates Man in His Own Image and Likeness                             |
| 60  | The Trinity Foreshadowed in the Old Testament                     | 102  | The Nature of the Soul  |
| 60  | “In Our Image”  | 102  | The Nature of the Body  |
| 61  | Abraham and the Three Visitors                                    | 102  | Mind and Free Will  |
| 61  | The Blessed Trinity Revealed by Christ                            | 103  | The Fall of Humanity  |
| 62  | God the Father in Scripture                                       | 103  | Man’s Original State  |
| 63  | <i>Sidebar: St. Augustine: How Late He Loved God</i>              | 104  | The Original Sin  |
| 64  | God the Son in Scripture  | 104  | The Transmission of Original Sin  |
| 65  | God the Holy Spirit in Scripture                                  | 105  | <i>Sidebar: Raising Cain: Offering our Best to God</i>                    |
| 66  | The Blessed Trinity and the Christian Life                        | 106  | Holiness: Humanity’s Purpose  |
| 68  | <b>Part III: Early Trinitarian Heresies</b>                       | 107  | <i>Sidebar: St. Dominic and the Dominicans</i>                            |
| 68  | The Blessed Trinity in the Early Church                           | 108  | Conclusion  |
| 68  | Heresies that Challenged the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity      | 109  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>  |
| 69  | Tables on the Heresies  | 110  | <i>Vocabulary</i>   |
| 74  | <i>Sidebar: St. Athanasius: Defender Against the Arian Errors</i> | 112  | <i>Study Questions</i>  |
| 75  | Heroes in Defense of the Faith                                    | 113  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>  |
| 75  | The Ecumenical Councils   | 114  | <i>From the Catechism</i>   |
| 76  | Table of Ecumenical Councils                                      | 117  | <b>Chapter 4:</b>   |
| 77  | <i>Sidebar: The Nicene Creed</i>                                  |      | <b>The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ</b>                             |
| 77  | Conclusion  | 117a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>   |
| 78  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>                                      | 117e | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>   |
| 79  | <i>Vocabulary</i>   | 117e | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>   |
| 79  | <i>Long-Term Assignment</i>                                       | 117f | <i>Key Ideas</i>  |
| 82  | <i>Study Questions</i>  | 118  | Introduction  |
| 83  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>  | 120  | The Early Life of Jesus   |
| 84  | <i>From the Catechism</i>   | 120  | Jesus Is Born   |
|     |   | 122  | Jesus’ Infancy  |
| 87  | <b>Chapter 3:</b>   | 122  | Jesus as an Adolescent  |
|     | <b>God the Father</b>   | 124  | The “Hidden Life” of Jesus  |
| 87a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>                                     | 124  | Lessons from Jesus’ “Hidden Life”   |
| 87c | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>   | 125  | <i>Sidebar: Jesus and the Essenes</i>                                     |
| 87c | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>                                       | 126  | The Baptism of Christ   |
| 87d | <i>Key Ideas</i>  | 126  | <i>Sidebar: The Mystery of the Lord’s Baptism by St. Maximus of Turin</i> |
| 88  | Introduction  | 128  | Temptation in the Desert  |
| 90  | God as Father   | 128  | <i>Sidebar: Forty Days and Forty Nights</i>                               |
| 90  | <i>Sidebar: The Our Father</i>                                    |      |   |





|      |   |      |  |
|------|---|------|--|
| 129  | The Call of the Apostles  | 174  | <i>Sidebar: The Difference Between Nature and Person</i>       |
| 130  | <i>Sidebar: St. John Chrysostom, On St. John's Gospel, "We Have Found the Messiah"</i>    | 176  | The Promised Messiah   |
| 131  | Jesus' Healing Ministry   | 178  | Redemption   |
| 132  | <i>Sidebar: Pope John Paul II and Youth</i>   | 178  | Only God Could Redeem Mankind                                  |
| 134  | The Parables of Jesus   | 178  | Christ Freely Embraced the Father's Plan of Redemption         |
| 134  | <i>Sidebar: Who Is My Neighbor?</i><br>by Pope Benedict XVI, <i>Deus Caritas Est</i> , 15 | 179  | Christ Freely Gives Us the Grace to Follow Him                 |
| 135  | <i>Sidebar: The Good Samaritan</i>  | 181  | Christ as Viewed in Other Religions                            |
| 136  | How to Pray   | 181  | Christ in Judaism  |
| 138  | Proclaiming the Kingdom   | 181  | Christ in Islam  |
| 139  | The Sermon on the Mount   | 182  | Christ in Buddhism   |
| 140  | The Beatitudes  | 182  | Christ in Hinduism   |
| 141  | <i>Sidebar: St. Francis of Assisi</i>   | 184  | Conclusion   |
| 143  | The Perfection of the Mosaic Law  | 185  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>                                   |
| 144  | Motivated by Love: Purity of Intentions   | 187  | <i>Vocabulary</i>  |
| 145  | The Last Supper   | 188  | <i>Study Questions</i>   |
| 145  | The Washing of Feet and the New Commandment   | 188  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>                                     |
| 146  | The Eucharist   | 189  | <i>From the Catechism</i>                                      |
| 148  | Passion and Death   | 191  | <b>Chapter 6:</b>  |
| 150  | The Resurrection  |      | <b>The Holy Spirit,</b>  |
| 151  | Conclusion  |      | <b>Third Person of the Blessed Trinity</b>                     |
| 153  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>  | 191a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>                                  |
| 155  | <i>Vocabulary</i>   | 191e | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>                                      |
| 155  | <i>Long-Term Assignment</i>   | 191e | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>                                    |
| 158  | <i>Study Questions</i>  | 191f | <i>Key Ideas</i>   |
| 159  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>  | 192  | Introduction   |
| 160  | <i>From the Catechism</i>   | 194  | The Holy Spirit and Pentecost:<br>The Foundation of the Church |
| 163  | <b>Chapter 5:</b>   | 194  | Awaiting the Promised Spirit                                   |
|      | <b>Jesus Christ—True God and True Man</b>   | 194  | <i>Sidebar: The Upper Room</i>                                 |
| 163a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>   | 194  | Descent of the Holy Spirit                                     |
| 163c | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>   | 196  | The Holy Spirit Enables us to Perceive God                     |
| 163c | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>   | 198  | The Holy Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation              |
| 163d | <i>Key Ideas</i>  | 198  | <i>Sidebar: Symbols of the Holy Spirit</i>                     |
| 164  | Introduction  | 200  | The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church                      |
| 167  | <i>Sidebar: Non-Biblical References to Christ</i>   | 201  | <i>Sidebar: The Charismatic Gifts of the Holy Spirit</i>       |
| 168  | God Incarnate   | 202  | The Holy Spirit in Sacred Scripture                            |
| 168  | The Humanity of Christ  | 202  | Inspiring the Authors of Scripture                             |
| 169  | Christ was Fully Man  | 202  | Revealing Christ in Scripture                                  |
| 170  | Christ, Like Us, Is a Descendant of Adam  | 203  | The Work of the Holy Spirit                                    |
| 170  | Like Us, Christ Felt Emotion, Pain, and Suffering   | 203  | Revealed as Third Person of the Blessed Trinity                |
| 171  | The Divinity of Christ  | 205  | Theological Virtues of the Holy Spirit                         |
| 171  | Christ Is the True and Only Son of God  | 205  | <i>Sidebar: Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit</i>              |
| 172  | Scripture Attests to Christ's Divinity  | 206  | The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit                             |
| 173  | True God, True Man  | 206  | <i>Sidebar: Prayer to the Holy Spirit</i>                      |
| 173  | Christ Has Two Distinct Natures   | 206  | 1. Wisdom (Enjoying the Presence of God)                       |
|      |   | 207  | 2. Understanding (Discerning Divine Truths)                    |



|      |   |
|------|---|
| 207  | <i>Sidebar: St. Simeon</i>                            |
| 208  | 3. Counsel (Making Wise Decisions)                    |
| 208  | <i>Sidebar: St. Philip and the Ethiopian</i>          |
| 208  | 4. Fortitude (Having Strength of Character)           |
| 209  | 5. Knowledge (Using Created Things Wisely)            |
| 209  | <i>Sidebar: St. Maximilian Kolbe</i>                  |
| 209  | 6. Piety (Knowing God as “Abba” Father)               |
| 210  | <i>Sidebar: St. Stephen</i>                           |
| 211  | 7. Fear of the Lord (Serving God Faithfully)          |
| 211  | <i>Sidebar: The Early Christians and Possessions</i>  |
| 212  | The Fruits of the Holy Spirit                         |
| 213  | <i>Sidebar: St. Therese of Lisieux</i>                |
| 214  | <i>Sidebar: St. Faustina Kowalska</i>                 |
| 215  | Conclusion  |
| 216  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>                          |
| 217  | <i>Long-Term Assignment</i>                           |
| 218  | <i>Vocabulary</i>                                     |
| 219  | <i>Study Questions</i>                                |
| 219  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>                            |
| 220  | <i>From the Catechism</i>                             |
| 223  | <b>Chapter 7:</b>                                     |
|      | <b>The Blessed Virgin Mary:</b>                       |
|      | <b>Mother of Jesus Christ, God the Son</b>            |
| 223a | <i>Chapter Planning Guide</i>                         |
| 223c | <i>Chapter Objectives</i>                             |
| 223c | <i>Keys to this Chapter</i>                           |
| 223d | <i>Key Ideas</i>                                      |
| 224  | Introduction  |
| 226  | The Life of Mary                                      |
| 229  | Mary, Mother of God                                   |
| 230  | <i>Sidebar: St. Joseph</i>                            |
| 231  | Immaculate Conception                                 |
| 233  | Mary Ever Virgin                                      |
| 234  | <i>Sidebar: Our Lady of Lourdes</i>                   |
| 235  | The Assumption  |
| 236  | Mother of the Church and all Christians               |
| 237  | Intercessor for Mankind                               |
| 239  | <i>Sidebar: Mary’s Song of Praise: The Magnificat</i> |
| 240  | Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary                 |
| 241  | <i>Sidebar: Our Lady of Guadalupe</i>                 |
| 243  | Conclusion  |
| 244  | <i>Supplementary Reading</i>                          |
| 246  | <i>Vocabulary</i>                                     |
| 248  | <i>Study Questions</i>                                |
| 249  | <i>Practical Exercises</i>                            |
| 250  | <i>From the Catechism</i>                             |

## STUDENT WORKBOOK

|     |               |
|-----|---------------|
| T1  | Chapter One   |
| T13 | Chapter Two   |
| T23 | Chapter Three |
| T35 | Chapter Four  |
| T45 | Chapter Five  |
| T55 | Chapter Six   |
| T65 | Chapter Seven |

## TESTS AND QUIZZES

### Chapter Tests

|      |               |
|------|---------------|
| T76  | Chapter One   |
| T83  | Chapter Two   |
| T90  | Chapter Three |
| T97  | Chapter Four  |
| T104 | Chapter Five  |
| T110 | Chapter Six   |
| T116 | Chapter Seven |

### Chapter Quizzes

|      |               |
|------|---------------|
| T124 | Chapter One   |
| T128 | Chapter Two   |
| T132 | Chapter Three |
| T135 | Chapter Four  |
| T139 | Chapter Five  |
| T143 | Chapter Six   |
| T147 | Chapter Seven |

## VOCABULARY REVIEW

|      |               |
|------|---------------|
| T152 | Chapter One   |
| T155 | Chapter Two   |
| T158 | Chapter Three |
| T161 | Chapter Four  |
| T164 | Chapter Five  |
| T166 | Chapter Six   |
| T168 | Chapter Seven |



# The Blessed Trinity

## CHAPTER 1



## CHAPTER ONE — TEACHER'S MANUAL

# Faith and Revelation

*Divine Revelation reached its culmination in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and it is through Christ that it is possible to have fuller knowledge of God.*



# CHAPTER PLANNING GUIDE

| LESSON   | OBJECTIVES   | OPENING & CLOSING ACTIVITIES   | GUIDED EXERCISES   | HOMEWORK   |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Introductory Lesson</b>                                   | <b>Learning Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Course goals and instructional procedures</li> </ul>   |  |  | <b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Chapter 1 through <i>God in Search of Man</i> (pp. 2–6)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>God and Man in Search of Each Other (pp. 2–6)</b>         | <b>Learning Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The difficulties in knowing about God and knowing him as a Person</li> <li>□ How God overcomes man's difficulties to know him</li> </ul> | <b>Anticipatory Set</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Class Discussion:</i> St. Columbanus and de Caussade on knowing the nature of God (p. 3)</li> </ul> <b>Closure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Write about knowing God as a Person (p. 6)</li> </ul> <b>Alternative Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Write about God's personal Revelation (p. 6)</li> </ul>     | <b>Partner Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The inner nature of God (p. 2)</li> <li>□ Philosophical argument for God's existence (p. 4)</li> </ul> <b>Focused Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Persons of the Blessed Trinity in the work of salvation (p. 3)</li> </ul> <b>Think/Pair/Share</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Saber and conocer a person</i> (p. 5)</li> </ul> | <b>Textbook</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Study Questions 1, 5 (p. 37)</li> <li>□ Practical Exercises 1–2 (p. 38)</li> </ul> <b>Workbook</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Questions 1–12</li> </ul> <b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Where Can God Be Found?</i> (pp. 7–8)</li> <li>□ <i>Reasoning God's Existence</i> (pp. 8–11)</li> <li>□ Sidebar: <i>Not Such a "Dumb Ox" After All</i> (p. 9)</li> <li>□ Sidebar: <i>Seeing God Face to Face</i> (p. 11)</li> </ul>          |
| <b>Natural Faith and Natural Knowledge of God (pp. 7–11)</b> | <b>Learning Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Natural faith</li> <li>□ Natural knowledge of God</li> </ul>   | <b>Anticipatory Set</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Brainstorm</i> what students believe to be true but do not know to be true (p. 7)</li> </ul> <b>Closure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Write about one argument for God's existence (p. 11)</li> </ul> <b>Alternative Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Write about St. Augustine's statement (p. 11)</li> </ul> | <b>Think/Pair/Share</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Natural and supernatural faith (p. 8)</li> <li>□ The "dumb ox" (p. 9)</li> </ul> <b>Graphic Organizer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Three arguments for God's existence (p. 10)</li> </ul> <b>Free Write</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The vision of God (p. 11)</li> </ul>   | <b>Textbook</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Study Questions 2–4 (p. 37)</li> <li>□ Practical Exercises 3–4 (p. 38)</li> </ul> <b>Workbook</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Questions 13–20</li> </ul> <b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <i>Revelation</i> (pp. 12–13)</li> <li>□ <i>An Encounter with Jesus Christ</i> (pp. 13–18)</li> <li>□ Sidebar: <i>Christ Is Present in the Liturgy</i> (p. 15)</li> <li>□ Sidebar: <i>St. Jerome, the Passionate Scholar</i> (p. 16)</li> </ul> |



## Introductory Lesson

(for first day of class)

### INSTRUCTION

- ❑ Give each student a *syllabus* for the course and review it with them. This should include the overall goals for the course and the breakdown of the content by semester, quarter, and week of instruction. It should include major projects and tests.
- ❑ Explain how the lessons of this text will be taught. Explain to the students the cycle of instructional lessons, review lesson, and test day.
- ❑ Give each student an *instructional policy* for this class and go over it with the students. The instructional policies are your classroom behavior and academic policies, including policies for late work, missing work, academic honesty, neatness, and so on.
- ❑ Pass out student texts and Bibles, and any other materials you are providing.
- ❑ If you wish students to read ahead, present the *Objectives* of tomorrow's first instructional lesson, and let them begin the *Homework Assignment* if any time remains.

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- ❑ Read through "God in Search of Man" (pp. 2–6)

## The Blessed Trinity

### CHAPTER 1

## Faith and Revelation



Those who wish to know the great deep must first review the natural world. For knowledge of the Trinity is properly likened to the depths of the sea, according to that saying of the Sage. And the great deep, who shall fathom it? Since, just as the depth of the sea is invisible to human sight, even so the Godhead of the Trinity is found to be unknowable by human senses. And thus if, I say, a man wishes to know what he ought to believe, let him not think that he understands better by speech than by believing; because when he seeks it, knowledge of the Godhead will recede farther than it was.

Therefore seek the supreme wisdom, not by verbal debate, but by the perfection of a good life; not with the tongue, but with the faith that issues from singleness of heart, not with that which is gathered from the guests of a learned irreligion. If then you seek the unutterable by discussion, he will fly farther from you than he was. If you seek by faith, wisdom shall stand in her accustomed station at the gate, and where she dwells she shall at least in part be seen. But then is she also truly in some measure attained when the invisible is believed in a manner that passes understanding, for God must be believed invisible as he is, though he may be partly seen by the pure heart.<sup>1</sup>

— St. Columbanus (AD 543–615)

Every moment reveals God to us. Faith is our light in this life. By it we know the truth without seeing it, we are put in touch with what we cannot feel, recognize what we cannot see, and view the world stripped of all its superficialities. Faith unlocks God's treasury. It is the key to all the vastness of his wisdom. The hollowness of all created things is disclosed by faith, and it is by faith that God makes his presence plain everywhere. Faith tears aside the veil so that we can see the everlasting truth.

— Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*

### IN THIS BOOK ON "THE BLESSED TRINITY" WE WILL:

- ✦ examine the Divine Revelation given to us through Jesus Christ and how God invites us to have a personal encounter with him;
- ✦ follow the Profession of Faith made in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds with special attention to what Jesus has taught us about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit;
- ✦ examine each Person of the Blessed Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and his relationship with the life of each individual; and
- ✦ explore the Christian response to God's call of faith.

### GUIDED EXERCISE

Have each student work with a **partner** to "unpack" the opening sentence of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in terms of what it says about the inner nature of God, God's motivation for creating human beings, and man's final end.

- ❑ God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life.
- God is absolutely perfect and happy in his own nature.
- God freely created people, motivated only by his own goodness.
- God destines man to share his own divine life.



## INTRODUCTION

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life," begins the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>2</sup> This divine call to share God's life is unique to mankind on earth. Having created man in his own image and likeness, God constantly draws closer to man. At the same time, he calls man to respond to his love by seeking him, knowing him, and loving him with all his strength.

Endowing man with the gift of free will, he invites us to seek, know, and love him through our free choice. In doing so, however, he also permits man to reject him. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose sin over obedience and thus severed their relationship with God. Their sin is passed down to every person as Original Sin and is evident in the human tendency toward sin.

But God did not reject man. Instead, he sought to help mankind understand the difference between good and evil. To Moses, he gave the Ten Commandments to help guide his Chosen People. In a sense, the Ten Commandments are an act of mercy, an instrument by which man can come to know God's will and differentiate good choices from evil choices.

The commandments were only part of God's Revelation to man. God also promised that he would send a Savior, a Redeemer, who would free his people from sin and death. In the fullness of time, God sent his Son Jesus, fully God and fully man, to reveal that his commandments are founded upon the great commandment to love God above all things and to love one's neighbor. Jesus' redemptive and saving act of suffering, dying on the Cross, and rising again to new life makes possible the salvation of every person who responds to God's call to love, the ultimate sharing in God's own life. After Christ ascended to Heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to guide and sanctify his Church and his disciples everywhere. "In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life."<sup>3</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, man is given the grace to accept God's call and to live as disciples of Christ.



The Holy Trinity by Previtali.  
Through the Holy Spirit, man is given the grace to accept God's call and to live as disciples of Christ.

### FOR DISCUSSION

- ✦ How can we come to know God?
- ✦ What can we learn about God through human reason?
- ✦ What is supernatural Revelation?
- ✦ How does God reveal himself to us today?

Chapter One 3

## GUIDED EXERCISE

Have each student complete a **focused reading** of the paragraph "The commandments were..." (p.2) using the following question:

- How is each of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity evident in the plan of salvation?

*God the Father revealed the commandments and promised to send a savior. God the Son is the Savior who taught the Ten Commandments are based on the Great Commandment of love and who redeemed man by his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. After his Ascension, the Son sent God the Holy Spirit to establish and to safeguard the Church and her members.*

## God and Man in Search of Each Other (pp. 2–6)

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

- The difficulties in knowing about God and knowing him as a Person
- How God overcomes people's difficulties to know him

### BASIC QUESTIONS

- Why is it difficult both to know about God and to know God personally?
- How are we able to know God?

### KEY IDEAS

- It is difficult to know God's attributes because his essence infinitely exceeds human intellectual capacity, and it is difficult to know God as a Person because we cannot encounter him with our senses.
- God has searched out each person, offering knowledge about him and friendship with him prior to his or her advance toward him.

### ANTICIPATORY SET

Lead a **class discussion** to compare the texts from St. Columbanus and de Caussade on what each says about the respective abilities of faith and reason to know the nature of God.



## GUIDED EXERCISE

Have each student work with a **partner** to develop a philosophical argument for the existence of God based on the sidebar "The Human Desire to Know God" (p. 4).

- Every natural human desire is directed to a good. For example, hunger and thirst are directed to the health of the body.
- Every natural human desire can be fulfilled. For example, food and water fulfill hunger and thirst.
- Human culture and history point to a universal desire for God. Why would people have a desire that cannot be fulfilled either in this life or in another life?

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

- ❑ Why is it difficult to know about God?

Human intellects cannot grasp the ideas we have about him adequately. As St. Thomas Aquinas said, "Since our intellect does not adequately grasp the divine essence in any of the conceptions which the names applied to God signify, the definitions of these terms cannot fully define what is in God."

- ❑ Give an example of an idea people have about God that does not fully define God.

God is immortal, which means he cannot die. This does not fully explain the nature of God's life.

- ❑ Why is it difficult to know God personally?

He is unknowable by the human senses since he is pure spirit.

- ❑ How does the text explain St. Columbanus's explanation of the knowledge of God?

Intellectual knowledge of God is not enough.

## MAN IN SEARCH OF GOD

Throughout human history, men and women have expended great effort searching for God. The simplest of children and the most learned of philosophers have contemplated the meaning and purpose of life and what happens when this earthly life comes to an end. Whether we realize it or not, the search for ultimate meaning is essentially a search for God.

In this search for God, however, we encounter an inescapable paradox. Etched upon our hearts and souls is a natural desire for God. Yet our human condition limits our capacity to discover and understand our infinite God. It is like a person who places more food on the plate than he or she can possibly eat. The eyes are too big for the stomach. In a similar way, our innate desire for God is greater than our human ability to comprehend him.

### THE HUMAN DESIRE TO KNOW GOD



The Eternal Father, detail from Assumption of the Virgin by Titian

All human desires are directed to some sort of good. When we are hungry and thirsty, we desire food and drink. That desire for food and drink points to our need for self-preservation. We need food and drink not only to satisfy our hunger and thirst but also to nourish our bodies, because nutrition and hydration are essential for life.

Our innate desire for God, a desire that crosses all human cultural and religious lines, points to the very existence of God. Furthermore, since all human desires are directed to a good, the desire for God is a desire for ultimate good, for perfection. Although that perfection cannot be reached in the present life, we aim to draw as near to God as possible in this life so as to attain perfect happiness with him in eternity.

Even the language we use in discussing God is insufficient to describe him completely. As St. Thomas Aquinas said, "Since our intellect does not adequately grasp the divine essence in any of the conceptions which the names applied to God signify, the definitions of these terms cannot fully define what is in God."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, although God invites us to have a personal relationship with him, we cannot see or experience him in the same way that we see or encounter another person. God is "unknowable by human senses," and "must be believed invisible as he is, though he may be partly seen by the pure heart."<sup>5</sup> How, then, can we ever come to "know" a God who is ultimately "unknowable"? Specifically, how can we come to "know" God, if in seeking him, as St. Columbanus said, our knowledge of him will "recede farther than it was"?<sup>6</sup>

We cannot truly know God simply by getting acquainted with facts about him. If we want to know him more profoundly, then we must do more than simply study about him. Reading the Bible and studying theology are commendable practices by which we may learn many wonderful things about God and whet our desire to draw closer to him, but we can never know him intimately if we stop at "head knowledge" alone. Expecting to "know" God in this manner, as St. Columbanus indicated, may ultimately make God seem even more distant from us.

We must seek a deeper experience of him through contemplation and intimate conversation with him. We must seek an encounter with him beyond reason through the light of faith. As Jean-Pierre de Caussade reminded us in one of the citations that opened this chapter, faith is "our light in this life." It makes God's presence plain everywhere and "tears aside the veil so that we can see the everlasting truth."

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

- ❑ What freedom does God give to man?

He gives the freedom to know, love, and serve him or to reject him.

- ❑ How did Adam and Eve exercise their freedom?

They chose disobedience over obedience and severed their relationship with God.

- ❑ How is Original Sin evident in the life of each person, even today?

It is evident in the tendency to sin, weakened will and intellect, sickness, pain, and death.

- ❑ How are the Ten Commandments an act of mercy?

They provide a blueprint for correct moral choices; by them people can more easily know God's will and differentiate good from evil actions.