

CONTENTS

Unit 1 God

1	There Really Is a God	1
2	God Does Not Change	5
3	What Else Can We Know about God?	7
4	Interpreting the Written Record of God's Revelation	10

Unit 2 There Are Three Persons in One God

5	Three Persons, One God	15
6	Person and Nature	19
7	God's Power, Wisdom, and Love	21

Unit 3 Creation

8	Why Did God Create Persons?	27
9	The Visible and the Invisible	28
10	There Is Order in Creation	30
11	Angels Are Persons	33
12	The Mission of the Faithful Angels	37

Unit 4 Human Dignity

13	The Uniqueness of Human Beings	41
14	We Are Persons	45
15	The Human Body Expresses the Person	50
16	Human Dignity Comes from God	51

Unit 5 Two Personal Loving Communion

17	God Is Love	55
18	Characteristics of God's Love	58
19	The Family as a Communion of Persons	60
20	The Role of Children within the Family	64

Unit 6 The Workplace

21	The Workplace, a Loving Communion of Persons	67
22	Work Is Permanent, Faithful, and Life-Giving	71
23	Differences between the Family and the Workplace	74
24	The Primacy of the Family over the Workplace	76
25	Materialism	77

Unit 7 Human Sin

26	Adam and Eve Reject God's Word	81
27	The Effects of the Sin of Adam and Eve	86
28	We Inherit Original Sin and Its Consequences	89
29	Sin Damages Relationships	92
30	You Will Be Like Gods	95

Unit 8 The Redeemer

31	Why God Did Not Prevent the First Sin	99
32	Merciful Love	102
33	God Prepares for the Redeemer	105
34	God's Ultimate Expression of Merciful Love	108

Unit 9 Jesus Redeems Us

35	Jesus Christ Returns the Father's Love	115
36	Adam and Eve Failed to Return God's Love	119
37	Adam and Eve Need a Savior Who Can Love God the Father	122
38	The Grace to Return God's Love Comes from Christ	125

Unit 10 Who Am I?

39	What Is My Identity?	129
40	The Prophetic Office of Jesus	132
41	False Prophets	136
42	Our Share in the Prophetic Office of Jesus	138

Unit 11 How Should I Act?

43	The Priestly Office of Jesus	141
44	Our Share in the Priestly Office of Jesus	142
45	The Ordained Priesthood and the Baptismal Priesthood	145
46	The Kingly Office of Jesus	150
47	Our Share in the Kingly Office of Jesus	153

Unit 12 Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth

48	Mary, Full of Grace	157
49	Mary, Mother of God	162
50	Mary, Our Mother and Our Example	166
51	Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary	168
52	Mary—Prophet, Priest, and King	171

Unit 13 In the Fullness of Time

53	The New Testament	175
54	The Gospels	178
55	The Birth of Jesus	179
56	Jesus as a Young Boy	181
57	John the Baptist	183

Unit 14 Jesus as Prophet

58	John Prepares the Way for Jesus	185
59	Jesus Reveals Our Identity through Direct Teaching	186
60	Jesus Reveals Our Identity in the Prayer He Taught	192
61	Jesus Reveals Our Identity through Parables	196
62	Jesus Reveals Our Identity through More Parables	198

Unit 15 Jesus as King

63	Jesus Is Not an Earthly King	203
64	Jesus as King Reveals Our Proper Activity	207
65	The Kingly Self-Discipline of Jesus	209
66	Jesus' Miracles as an Expression of His Kingly Office	213
67	Jesus' Miracles as an Expression of His Kingly Office (Continued)	215

Unit 16 Jesus as Priest

68	The Old Testament Priesthood Prefigures the New Testament Priesthood	219
69	Jesus as Priest Reveals Our Proper Activity	221
70	The Last Supper with Jesus	224
71	Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection	229

Unit 17 The Church Carries On the Work of Jesus

72 The Beginnings of the Church	235
73 The Prophetic Work of the Church	240
74 The Priestly Work of the Church	242
75 The Kingly Work of the Church	248

Unit 18 Vocation, a Call from God

76 Married, Single, Lay, Ordained, and Religious Vocations	251
77 The Call	257
78 Discerning Our Vocations	260
79 Vocation and the Communion of Persons	263

Unit 19 Human Love

80 Wholehearted Love	267
81 Marital Love	272
82 Violations of Human Dignity	277

Unit 20 Death—A Meeting with Christ

83 Soul and Body	283
84 Particular and General Judgments	287
85 Death and Our Faith	292
86 Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell	295

Unit 21 The Commandments—Love of God

87 The Conscience	299
88 We Learn from Others	302
89 The First Commandment	305
90 The Second Commandment	307
91 The Third Commandment	309

Unit 22 The Commandments—Love of Neighbor

92 The Fourth Commandment	313
93 The Fifth Commandment	316
94 The Sixth and Ninth Commandments	319
95 The Seventh and Tenth Commandments	322
96 The Eighth Commandment	325

Unit 23 Liturgical Articles

97 Liturgical Books	329
98 Liturgical Vestments	331
99 Liturgical Accessories	334
100 Liturgical Furniture and Vocabulary	340

<i>Prayers to Know</i>	343
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UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Vocabulary

person: someone who has a mind and a will; who someone is

nature: what something or someone is

Blessed Trinity: three Persons in one God

LESSON 5: THREE PERSONS, ONE GOD

We know from Jesus that there are three Persons in one God. Before His Ascension into Heaven, Jesus said to His Apostles, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). In God, there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Learn more by reading YOUCAT 35.

Jesus Himself is God. He is God the Son. As the Nicene Creed states, “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God... God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God”. The Nicene Creed is an ancient summary statement of what Catholics believe. It comes from the first two councils, the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). It can be found in any missalette. Another familiar ancient statement of the Faith is the Apostles’ Creed.

There were many times when Jesus taught about His Father and prayed to Him. The Father, too, is God. Again, the Nicene Creed states, “I believe in one God, the Father almighty”.



Learn more by reading YOUCAT 37.

Finally, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would come after Jesus’ Ascension into Heaven. The Holy Spirit is also God. Going to the Nicene Creed for a third time we find, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified”.

So, God the Son is God; God the Father is God; and God the Holy Spirit is God. Since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all God, does that mean that there are three Gods? No, there aren’t three Gods. There is only one God. But, in the one God there is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If what you have just read is difficult to understand, you have read it correctly. Three Persons in one God is the deepest mystery of the Catholic Faith. No one except God Himself understands it totally.

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD



*Three Persons in one God
is the deepest mystery
of the Catholic Faith.*

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Review Questions

1. What two short prayers do we say that express our belief that there are three Persons in one God?

2. Read Matthew 10:20. How does this verse point to the doctrine of three Persons in one God?

Blessed Trinity Scripture Search

Find the following Scripture passages in the Bible. Fill in the blanks and answer the questions.

1. Matthew 28:19–20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the _____ and of the _____ and of the _____, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”.
2. Matthew 10:20: “for it is not you who speak, but the _____ of your _____ speaking through you.”
3. Matthew 3:13–17, Mark 1:9–11, Luke 3:21–22, John 1:32–34.
What is the main event in all four Gospel passages?

How is the Blessed Trinity present in these passages?

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

4. John 14:8–9. How does Jesus answer Philip when Philip asks Him to show the Father to the Apostles?

5. John 14:16–17. Who is the Counselor Jesus promises to ask the Father to send?

6. John 16:13. Who will guide us to the truth?

7. John 20:22. Jesus breathed on the Apostles and said: “_____.”

8. Luke 24:49. Who is the “promise of my Father” that Jesus is sending to the Apostles?

9. Acts 1:8. From whom will the Apostles receive the power to witness to the world?

10. Acts 2:1–4. In what three ways did the Holy Spirit make His presence known to the Apostles?

Review Questions

1. What do we mean when we describe God as the “Blessed Trinity”?

2. Name the three Persons in one God.

3. What is another name for God the Son?

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Review Questions (continued)

4. What prayers of faith summarize what we believe?

5. Why can't we understand fully the concept of the Blessed Trinity?

LESSON 6: PERSON AND NATURE

Even though we cannot fully understand the mystery of the three Persons in one God, we can understand it a little if we keep in mind the distinction between person and nature.

Person is *who* someone is. Names are given to persons, and a name tells who a person is. For example, if you are asked who you are, you respond with your name: Joe, Jennifer, Maureen, John, or whatever your name is. A name names your person. A name tells others who you are.

On the other hand, nature is *what* something or someone is. For example, each of us is human. We say that we are human beings. As a human being, each of us has a human nature.

There are certain capacities that belong to human nature. Two essential capacities are the capacities to think and to choose. In other words, as human beings, each of us has a mind and a will. We don't all have the exact same mind and will, but each of us, individually, has a mind and a will.

Further, the human body is part of human nature. Each of us, individually, has a body. No two of us share the same body. As human beings, then, each of us is one person (one name, one *who*), possessing one nature (not the exact same nature, but individual repetitions of the same nature).

Using the concepts of person and nature in reference to God, we can say that God is three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), but that each Person possesses one and the same nature (not individual repetitions of the same nature). Essential to God's nature is the capacity to think and to choose. God has a mind and a will.

In God, then, there are three Persons, but each Person possesses the exact same mind and will as the other two Persons. There are not three minds and three wills in God, but one mind and one will. In other words, each Person in God thinks with the same mind and chooses with the same will.

The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each name a Person (each name tells who one of the Persons is), and each Person has the exact same nature (there is only one divine nature). We call the mystery of three Persons in one God the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD



Learn more by reading **YOUCAT 36**.

In Luke 3:21–22, each Person of the Blessed Trinity made Himself known. Read this passage and answer the following questions.

How did God the Father make Himself known? _____

How did God the Holy Spirit make Himself known? _____

How did God the Son make Himself known? _____

When we say that God has a mind and a will, we are not saying that His mind and will are the same as our minds and wills. Recall that in the discussion of God, we learned that God is transcendent. That means God is far beyond us in every aspect of His being. Consequently, He is infinitely more intelligent than we are. He is infinitely more loving than we are. He is infinitely more powerful than we are.

Review Questions

1. What do we mean by “person”?

2. What do we mean by “nature”?

3. What are the two essential capabilities that belong to human nature?

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Review Questions (continued)

4. In addition to the mind and the will, what else is part of human nature?

5. As a human being, each of us is _____ person possessing _____ nature.

6. God is _____ Persons, each possessing _____ and the same nature.

7. If there are three Persons in one God, are there three minds and three wills?

8. What do we mean when we say that God is transcendent?

9. Describe several ways by which God transcends us.

LESSON 7: GOD'S POWER, WISDOM, AND LOVE

In one of his apostolic exhortations, Blessed John Paul II wrote, "God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion" (*The Christian Family in the Modern World*, no. 11). The Pope is teaching us that what happens among the Persons of the Blessed Trinity is love. The Father loves the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son loves the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son. The life that God lives in Himself is personal (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); it is loving (each of the Persons loves the other two); and it is a communion (the three Persons are united in Their common love).

In Himself God lives a mystery of personal loving communion. How does God act toward us? God acts in power, wisdom, and love.

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

God's power is demonstrated in creation. No one has ever made something from nothing, except God. God made the entire universe, all the human beings who ever lived, and the world of angels. To create all of this entails unspeakable power.

A priest and early writer in the Church, Saint Hippolytus, who lived around the year 235, said about the creation from nothing by God, "God was all alone and nothing existed but himself when he determined to create the world. He thought of it, willed it, spoke the word and so made it. It came into being instantaneously, exactly as he had willed. It is enough then for us to be aware of a single fact: nothing is coeternal with God. Apart from God there was simply nothing else. Yet although he was alone, he was manifold because he lacked neither reason, wisdom, power nor counsel. All things were in him and he himself was all. At a moment of his own choosing and in a manner determined by himself, God manifested his Word [God the Son], and through him he made the whole universe" (*The Liturgy of the Hours*, vol. 1, Office of Readings, December 23).

God's wisdom is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Wisdom is the knowledge of the greatest things. Jesus revealed the knowledge of the greatest things. He revealed everything that we need to know about God and about ourselves.

In fact, Jesus is called the wisdom of God. **Read**

1 Corinthians 1:24.

God shows His love for us by coming to live within us. God wouldn't give Himself to us if He didn't love us. But God does give Himself to us, especially in the Sacraments. When we receive the Sacraments worthily, God comes to dwell in us and to share His life with us. We call the gift of God's life that He shares with persons grace.

We can say that God shows His power through creation, His wisdom through Jesus, and His love by coming to live in us. And even though all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity act toward us in power, wisdom, and love, we can associate power with the Father, wisdom with the Son, and love with the Holy Spirit.

We profess in the Nicene Creed that we believe in God the Father, maker of Heaven and earth. The Father acted in power to create Heaven and earth. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who is Light from Light (light lights up the dark, and Jesus enlightens our minds with wisdom). And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life (grace). The Holy Spirit gives us God's life because He loves us.

Within Himself God lives a mystery of personal loving communion, and toward us God shows His power, wisdom, and love. By knowing these things about God, we know a great deal. But there is so much more to know about God that we will never know it all. We can only hope that each day our appreciation of who God is and what He is doing for us will grow.



UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Read the quotes and answer the questions that follow.

The Holy Spirit is the giver of life (grace). In fact, through the Sacraments the Holy Spirit truly comes to live in us. Blessed John Paul II has spoken of the Holy Spirit living in us:

The Church prays: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love" (Liturgy of Pentecost).

“Fill the hearts.” Consider, young friends, how great is the human heart, if God alone can fill it with the Holy Spirit.

You Are My Favorites, 165

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. . . . When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8:14–17

Consider these words of Blessed John Paul II and of Sacred Scripture. Is God Someone who wants to remain far away from us and uninvolved in our lives? Explain. What difference does God make in your life right now?

[illegible]

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Sacrament Crossword Puzzle

Look ahead in your textbook to pages 243 and 244. On these two pages you will find information on the seven Sacraments that will help you solve the puzzle.

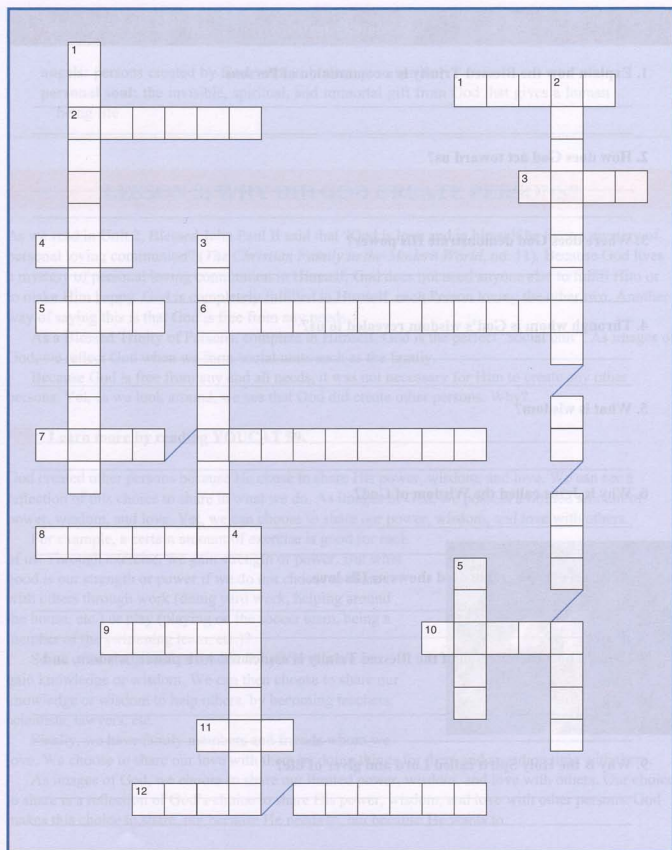
Across

1. A sign of Christ's Body, used in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.
2. A special oil used in the Sacraments.
3. A sign of Christ's Blood, used in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.
4. Another name for chrism.
5. Our _____ are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
6. In this Sacrament our faith is strengthened by the gift of the Holy Spirit.
7. In this Sacrament we receive Jesus as our spiritual food and drink.
8. In this Sacrament Original Sin is taken away, and we become members of the Church.
9. The physical sign of Baptism.
10. One of the physical signs of Holy Orders is the imposition, or laying on, of the bishop's _____.
11. A promise.
12. In this Sacrament men are ordained bishops, priests, and deacons.

Down

1. The Sacrament in which our sins are forgiven.
2. The Sacrament in which Jesus meets us and heals us spiritually and sometimes physically.
3. Instituted by Jesus to give us grace.
4. The Sacrament in which a man and a woman say "Yes" to one another through their vows.
5. In the Sacraments we receive _____.

UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD



UNIT 2: THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Review Questions

1. Explain how the Blessed Trinity is a communion of Persons.

2. How does God act toward us?

3. Where does God demonstrate His power?

4. Through whom is God's wisdom revealed to us?

5. What is wisdom?

6. Why is Jesus called the Wisdom of God?

7. Name several ways that God shows us His love.

8. Explain how each Person of the Blessed Trinity is associated with power, wisdom, and love.

9. Why is the Holy Spirit called Lord and giver of life?
