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Spiritual

The Truth of Faith

by Reverend Louis J. Cameli, STD

The creed, whether the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed that we recite every Sunday contains a compact summary of *what* we believe. This "what" is very important and, in some ways, sets us apart as people of faith. For us, faith is never just a matter of a feeling or attitude of deep trusting reliance on God. It certainly *is* that for us, but it is more.

We believe that God has acted in history, beginning with the creation of the world. For Christian people, God's decisive action in history was the sending of his only Son, who died and rose for us. And God continues to act in history by sending his Holy Spirit into the hearts of all who believe. All this means that God has touched and continues to touch this world and our very lives. There is truth in this. And that is what we affirm when we say that we believe *that* Jesus died and rose for us, *that* God forgives our sins, *that* we belong to the Body of Christ, his Church.

All this represents the content or the "what" of our faith. We profess the truth of our faith. For some people, what they believe does not matter

so much as that they believe, that they have trust. For us, in our tradition, we do have trusting reliance on God, *because* we have come to know the truth of faith, the truth of what God has done.

This truth of what God has done and continues to do provides us with reliability when we profess our faith. We are secure in his love because our faith links us to the one who is absolutely true to his word. We find this in the first letter of John:

*We profess
the truth
of what God has
done for us.*

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. (1 John 4:13-16)

Reflection

For us as teachers of faith, this experience of the truth of faith is both important and challenging. Obviously, it is important because it leads us to embrace the mystery of God present to us in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the passage from 1 John attests. It is also challenging, because we live in a culture in which truth seems to be very fluid and very relative. What is truth for you may not be truth for me. When we profess our faith it is a very different matter. We hold that what God has revealed and what he asks us to believe is truth in its fullness, a truth that we can live for and a truth we can die for, a truth that is forever valid and destined for all people.

As we grasp ever more clearly the dimensions of the truth we profess in faith, especially as it is embodied in our creed, we will be more apt instruments to communicate this reality to those entrusted to us.

For Reflection

- What is the truth of your Christian faith that you are proudest to profess? Why is this so?
- What is the importance of having a creed to profess in unity with others?

Louis J. Cameli is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and pastor of Divine Savior Parish in Norridge, Illinois. He completed his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome and obtained a doctorate in theology with a specialization in spirituality. He is the former director of ongoing formation of priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago and director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House, Mundelein, Illinois. In February, 2002, he received the Pope John XXIII Award from the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC) for his contributions to the continuing education and ongoing formation of priests. He has authored numerous books on spirituality and also served as a writer and theological consultant for RCL Benziger's *Faith First* and *Faith First Legacy Edition* K-8 curriculum.

Trinitarian God

God we **praise** you,
Father **all-powerful**, Christ Lord and Savior,
Spirit of Love.

You **reveal** yourself
in the depths of our being,
drawing us to **share** in your life and your love.

One God, three Persons,
be **near** to the people formed in your image,
close to the world your love brings to life.

We ask you this,
Father, Son and Spirit,
one God, **true** and living,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Opening Prayer for Trinity Sunday

Overview: *I Believe, We Believe* Module

I Believe, We Believe will acquaint you with the central creedal statements of the Catholic Church. One goal is to help you reflect upon and articulate your personal faith. Another goal is to understand more fully the truths you profess as a member of the believing community so that you can share your faith with others. This presentation of the truths of your faith is not an exhaustive treatment of these beliefs. However, through the process of reflection on the content provided here, you will increase your understanding of the truths of the Catholic faith and feel more confident in expressing them.

Each of the four segments in this module is divided into two parts. Here is an overview of the topics that each segment of the booklet and DVD will explore:

1. God the Father

Part 1: The Revelation of God

Part 2: The Story of Salvation

2. God the Son

Part 1: The Incarnation of Jesus

Part 2: The Paschal Mystery

3. God the Holy Spirit

Part 1: The Holy Spirit in Scripture and Tradition

Part 2: The Role of the Holy Spirit

4. The Christian Creed

Part 1: The Formation of the Creeds

Part 2: The Church

You will find a six-page booklet process for each segment to help you

reflect on the DVD content and choose ways to apply what you have learned to your life. Here is the structure you will find:

- 1. Introduction:** The goal and objectives for each session, plus an opening reflection question
- 2. Looking Ahead—Presentation:** A video overview and a space to write questions and comments
- 3. Looking Back—Reflection:** Three questions to check comprehension and provide an opportunity for dialogue
- 4. Looking Beyond—Application:** An opportunity to reflect on Scripture passages and relate them to life

There is an enrichment article at the end of each segment process that extends learning by exploring a topic related to the segment theme.

This module is only a brief introduction to the creedal statements of the Catholic faith. As you continue to read, study, reflect, and attend classes and workshops, you will grow in knowledge and insight. Both adult and catechist formation requires the mutual support of other learners. Try to participate in the learning process of this module in a group setting. If circumstances require that you work independently, find at least one other person with whom you can share your reflections.

Joanne Chafe is an internationally recognized author and lecturer in the field of adult catechesis. She has served as Director of the National Office of Religious Education, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, is chairperson of the International Forum on Adult Religious Education in the Roman Catholic Church, and Project Specialist, Adult Portfolio, National Office of Religious Education, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. She is past president of the Religious Education Association of the United States and Canada. Ms. Chafe holds a Master of Theological Studies degree from AST, Canada, a Master of Religious Education degree from Boston College, and a doctorate in Adult and Continuing Education from Columbia University, New York.

God the Son

"And you, Peter, Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29) The challenge standing at the heart of Mark's Gospel is the central question that must be answered in every age by every Christian. The story of our Church has recorded the struggle of countless generations of Christians as they encountered this Christ of faith, and attempted to understand the life and message of this person whom the Church recognizes as the fullness of God's Revelation to us.

The teachings of the Church about Jesus Christ hold the accumulated wisdom of all the faithful who encountered the risen Lord in the experiences of their lives, and embraced his way of life. It is our faith that God's plan for our salvation reached its climax in Jesus Christ. He made all things new and reconciled all humanity with the Father. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus was one of us and also God.

Jesus announced the reign of God, showing us glimpses of the world that God intended and inviting us to help that "kingdom come." Through his life and message, he revealed the Father's justice, healing and forgiveness. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ revealed the Paschal mystery that death leads to new life.

Goal

To be able to define for others the Christ of faith

Learning Objectives

- To articulate the meaning of the Incarnation
- To describe the Church's understanding of the Paschal mystery
- To express Jesus' message about the reign of God

Exercise

Take a few moments to reflect on the following. Then discuss your responses with another person or with your group.

List some words that describe the Jesus you know.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, through your Paschal Mystery we learn the Good News that we are redeemed. You show us the lives we are to live and invite us to take up your work and continue it in the world today. We thank you for the great gift of saving love that you continue to pour out in our lives. Amen.

Looking Back

Part 1: The Incarnation of Jesus

Reflect silently on one or more of the questions below and then jot down your response(s). Then share your thoughts with another person or with a group.

1. While Jesus is the fullness of God's Revelation, the Church also teaches that God is revealed in all times and places. What evidence have you seen that non-Christians as well as Christians have discovered something of the mystery of God?

2. What does the Incarnation reveal about God's love and mercy?

3. In what ways does your own life reflect the dying and rising of Jesus Christ?

Remember . . .

The eternal Word of God came and lived among us.

•

Jesus is the supreme act of God's love and mercy.

•

Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of Mary.

•

The Incarnation means that Jesus became truly man while remaining truly God.

•

The four Gospels reveal the saving story of Jesus.

Looking Ahead

Part 2: Paschal Mystery

The second part of segment 2 explores Jesus' message of the reign of God and the meaning of the Paschal mystery. Below you will find an outline of the principal content of the DVD that accompanies this part. You may wish to refer to this outline as you watch the DVD. Below the outline, there is space for you to jot down comments and questions that occur to you during and after the viewing.

**The Beatitudes
... shed light
on the actions
and attitudes
characteristic
of the
Christian life.**

CCC 1717

Video Outline

- A contemporary retelling of the story of Jesus healing Jairus' daughter
- An explanation of the role of the healing stories of Jesus in bringing people to conversion
- A description of the reign of God through a recounting of the Sermon on the Mount
- An exploration of the meaning of the Paschal mystery that lies at the heart of Christian belief
- The image of a banquet to describe the fullness of life in Christ
- A description of the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom Christ lives in our hearts and in the Church today

Comments and Questions

Use the space below to list comments, questions, feelings, or ideas that occur to you as you view the video.

Watch Segment 2,
Part 2 of the DVD
or CD-ROM now.

Looking Back

Part 2: Paschal Mystery

Reflect silently on one or more of the questions below and then jot down your response(s). Then share your thoughts with another person or with a group.

1. Living our faith is saying yes to Jesus' call to bring the reign of God. Create a word map that reflects ways the Church is responding to this call.



2. Since Jesus' message contradicts many of the values of contemporary culture, why do you think it continues to thrive?

3. In what ways does your own life reflect the dying and rising of Jesus?

Remember . . .

Jesus announced the reign of God.

Jesus' miraculous healings reveal God's endless love for us.

The reign of God is God's saving love fully manifest in the world.

The mystery of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection is called the Paschal mystery.

Jesus' Resurrection refers to his rising from the dead to a new life beyond time and space.

Christ lives in us and in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary in the Church

by Rev. Robert J. Hater

The Creed professes that Jesus “was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.” Jesus’ birth is described in two infancy stories, or narratives, in Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels. These accounts differ in details but not in the core truth they profess, namely, that Jesus is both divine and human.

In each account, there is an annunciation. In Matthew, the angel of the Lord announces to Joseph, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20). In Luke, the annunciation is made to the Virgin Mary. The angel says, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. . . . The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:28, 35) Mary’s faith in God led to her response, “Here am I, the [handmaid] of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

These gospel passages teach us that the virginal conception of Jesus is beyond all human possibility or understanding, and therefore is an

act of God. The Church’s continuing reflection has led her to proclaim Mary’s real and perpetual virginity “even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man.” (CCC 499)

Because of her unique prerogative as the Mother of God, Mary was given special gifts by God. The greatest of these gifts is that, as the angel had announced to her, she was completely filled with God’s grace. This grace empowered her “to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation. . . .” (CCC 490)

The Church’s dogma of the Immaculate Conception holds that Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, preserved free from all stain of original sin. Filled with the grace of the Spirit, Mary remained holy and free from every personal sin throughout her life. It was therefore fitting that she was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life. This belief the Church celebrates as Mary’s Assumption.

Mary is
the mother of the
members of Christ’s
Body, the Church.

Reverend Robert J. Hater is an internationally known lecturer and writer and has served as professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton, Ohio. Father Hater was the religious education director for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati from 1973 to 1979 and initiated the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program for the Archdiocese. He received the 1994 Catechetical Award from the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership. Father Hater holds a doctorate in Philosophy from St. John’s University, Jamaica, New York.

MEMORARE
Remember,
most loving
Virgin Mary,
never was it
heard that
anyone who
turned to you
for help was
left unaided.
Inspired by
this confidence,
though
burdened by
my sins,
I run to your
protection for
you are my
mother. Mother
of the Word of
God, do not
despise my
words of
pleading but be
merciful and
hear my prayer.
Amen.

Because of Mary's unique prerogative as Mother of the Redeemer, and because of her faithfulness to God's calling, Sacred Tradition also speaks of her as the mother of the Church. Since Christ is the head of the Church and all Christians are its members, Mary is the mother of the members of Christ's Body, the Church. As mother of the Church, Mary is also our mother. Like any loving mother she prays for her children. We can join our prayers with hers as we praise and thank God. As her spiritual children, we also ask her to join her prayers with ours as she intercedes with God for us.

Mary's unique holiness derives totally from Christ. Because the Son is the second Person of the Trinity, when Mary said yes to God's invitation to be Jesus' mother, she became the "Theotokos," the Mother of God. This image, depicted over the centuries in eastern and western iconography and art, reminds us that we too are called to holiness. Like Mary, we become holy by following her lead, by saying yes to God's grace and God's invitation to faith in our lives. In so doing we too become Christ-bearers.

● ● ● *For Reflection* ● ● ●

How does Mary serve as a model for you in your life?