

Table of Contents

Foreword by Most Reverend John M. D'Arcy	7
Introduction	9
How to Use <i>Making Disciples, 2nd Edition</i>	19
Session One — Our Desire and Capacity for God	25
Session Two — Divine Revelation: <i>The Initiative of God's Love</i>	29
Session Three — The Life of Faith: <i>Our Response to God's Invitation to Relationship</i>	33
Session Four — The Mystery of God	36
Session Five — The Mystery of the Trinity	40
Session Six — The Mystery of Creation	44
Session Seven — The Mystery of Sin	48
Session Eight — Jesus Christ: <i>The Fulfillment of God's Promise</i>	52
Session Nine — The Mystery of the Incarnation	56
Session Ten — Mary: <i>The Virgin Mother of God</i>	62
Session Eleven — Jesus' Ministry: <i>Teaching, Healing, Reconciling</i>	67
Session Twelve — The Mystery of Redemption	72
Session Thirteen — The Mystery of the Resurrection, Ascension, and Lordship of Christ	77
Session Fourteen — The Holy Spirit	82
Session Fifteen — The Mystery of the Church: <i>One and Holy</i>	85
Session Sixteen — The Mystery of the Church: <i>Catholic and Apostolic</i>	91
Session Seventeen — The Call to Holiness: <i>Communion of Saints</i>	95
Session Eighteen — The Last Things	100
Session Nineteen — Catholic Morality and the Dignity of the Human Person	103
Session Twenty — Living the Catholic Moral Life	108
Session Twenty-one — The Ten Commandments: <i>Introduction and Commandments I-III</i>	114
Session Twenty-two — The Ten Commandments: <i>Commandments IV-X</i>	118
Session Twenty-three — The Mystery of Grace and Justification	125
Session Twenty-four — Sin and the Constant Call of Conversion	130
Session Twenty-five — The Liturgical and Sacramental Life	135
Session Twenty-six — The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation	142
Session Twenty-seven — Eucharist: <i>Theology of the Mass</i>	146
Session Twenty-eight — Eucharist: <i>Structure of the Mass</i>	151
Session Twenty-nine — The Sacraments of Healing: <i>Penance and Anointing of the Sick</i>	155
Session Thirty — The Sacrament of Matrimony	160
Session Thirty-one — The Sacrament of Holy Orders	166
Session Thirty-two — Prayer in the Christian Life	171
Session Thirty-three — Developing a Life of Prayer	175

Session Thirty-four — Our Father: <i>The Spirituality of Gospel Living</i>	182
Session Thirty-five — The Liturgical Year	188
Session Thirty-six — Catholic Social Teaching	194
Session Thirty-seven — Sacred Scripture in Catholic Tradition	200
Session Thirty-eight — Ecumenism	207
Session Thirty-nine — The Catholic Church's Relations to Non-Christians and the Missionary Mandate	212
Session Forty — Stewardship	215
Session Forty-one — Catholic Spirituality	221
Session Forty-two — Being an Active Parishioner: <i>Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy</i>	227
Index of Hymns	231
Bibliography	233
Contributors	237

Session Four

The Mystery of God

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To present the ways we have of coming to know God through His revelation.

Hymn: "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

Invitation to prayer — silent prayer

Oration:

Lord our God, Father of all,
you guard us under the shadow of your wings
and search into the depths of our hearts.

Remove the blindness that cannot know you
and relieve the fear that would hide us from your sight.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Alternate Opening Prayer
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Scripture reading: Exodus 3:1-14

Meanwhile Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned."

When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. So indeed the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have truly noted that the Egyptians are oppressing them. Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" He answered, "I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain." "But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

TEACHING TO BE PRESENTED

I. In revealing Himself to Moses as "I am who am" God speaks of His uniqueness as being the One and only true God.

A. "The Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance, and essence' (*Roman Catechism*, I, 2, 2)" (CCC 200).

1. God said to His chosen people the Israelites that "'the LORD our God is one LORD' (Dt 6:4)" (CCC 201).
2. Following upon the statement of His being one Lord, God revealed that His people are to love Him "'with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Mk 12:29-30)" (CCC 202).
3. Through the teaching of His prophets God calls Israel and all people to turn to Him as the one, true God (CCC 201).

B. Jesus through His teaching affirms the oneness of God (CCC 202).

1. Distinctive to Christian faith is the confession that Jesus is Lord (CCC 202).
2. Jesus is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life (CCC 202).
3. In proclaiming three persons in one God the Lateran Council IV professed that "'there is only one true God, eternal, infinite (*immensus*) and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty, and ineffable' (Lateran Council IV: DS 800)" (CCC 202).

II. God reveals His name.

A. A name identifies and expresses a person's being, who he or she is. To give one's name is to "make oneself known to others" (CCC 203).

1. Progressively God revealed His name.
2. In the theophany of the burning bush, God said to Moses, "'I AM WHO I AM' (Ex 3:14)" (CCC 205). A theophany is a manifestation of God to the senses.
3. God's divine name is a mystery just as God Himself is (CCC 206).
4. Although God is hidden from our sight, He makes Himself close to His people (CCC 206).
5. In awe of God's divine presence Moses covers his face and removes his sandals. This recognition of God's greatness reveals the insignificance of humanity (CCC 208).

B. God is merciful and gracious.

1. Israel turns away from God by worshiping the golden calf.
2. Moses intercedes on behalf of the people and God agrees to walk in the midst of the Israelites' infidelity.
3. God reveals His steadfast love and absolute fidelity (CCC 210).

4. God's ultimate act of love is the fullness of revelation in and through His Son Jesus Christ (CCC 211).

C. God alone is.

1. As time progressed through the centuries, Israel's faith deepened and God's name became known: YHWH, "I AM WHO I AM."
 - a. There are no other gods like the one true God, YHWH (CCC 212).
 - b. In the one true God there is no change.
2. "God is 'He who Is' from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises" (CCC 212).
 - a. The one true God created heaven and earth.
 - b. The one true God transcends the world and history.

III. God is truth and love.

- A. The apostle John teaches that God is truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness" (1 Jn 1:5) (CCC 214).
 1. Throughout Scripture God's truth is proclaimed. "God's truth is his wisdom" (cf. Wis 13:1-9) (CCC 216).
 2. "God is also truthful when he reveals himself" (CCC 217). St. John teaches us that Jesus bore witness to the truth of God (cf. 1 Jn 5:20; Jn 17:3) (CCC 217).
- B. God's love is steadfast and everlasting.
 1. God never tired of forgiving His chosen people Israel.
 2. Through the revelation of Tradition we are assured of God's loving mercy.
 3. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16) (cf. CCC 221).
 4. "God's very being is love" (CCC 221).

IV. Believing in the One God revealed through Jesus Christ has significant consequences for the entirety of life (CCC 222).

- A. This belief means knowing and accepting the majesty and greatness of God (CCC 223).
- B. This belief means living in gratitude (CCC 224).
- C. This belief means knowing the dignity of each person created in God's image and likeness (CCC 225).
- D. This belief means using created goods properly (CCC 226).
- E. This belief means living in trust of God no matter what the circumstance (CCC 227).
- F. "Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and neither to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him" (CCC 229).

V. God is personal.

- A. God has made it quite clear that He cares about His people: He showed His mercy, fidelity and kindness as He led the Israelites out of slavery and into the promised land (Ps 105; 106).
- B. God is one who acts. This shows clearly in the book of Exodus, where God acts on behalf of those He loves.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Do you think most people believe in God?
2. Which attribute of God do you find most comforting and appealing?
3. What is there in the surrounding culture which prevents people from having a relationship with God?

Concluding prayers

Intercessions

Closing prayer

Hymn (optional)

RESOURCES

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 200-229

Essentials of the Faith, McBride, chap. 5

NOTES...

Session Five

The Mystery of the Trinity

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To present the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, which is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life.

Hymn: "Sing Praise to Our Creator"

Invitation to prayer — silent prayer

Oration:

Father,
you sent your Word to bring us truth
and your Spirit to make us holy.
Through them we come to know the mystery of your life.
Help us to worship you, one God in three Persons,
by proclaiming and living our faith in you.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

*Opening Prayer
Trinity Sunday*

Scripture reading: Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

TEACHING TO BE PRESENTED

- I. God is triune from eternity. This is revealed in the Incarnation and the sending of the Holy Spirit. The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation assist believers to grasp the mystery of the Trinity (CCC 236-237).
 - A. The Father is revealed by the Son. Jesus, the Son, reveals that God is Father — not simply as Creator of all, but Father in relation to His Son.

1. "God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, 'his first-born son' (Ex 4:22)" (CCC 238).
 2. God "is 'the Father of the poor,' of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection" (cf. 2 Sm 7:14; Ps 68:6) (CCC 238).
 3. By calling God "Father" the language of faith indicates:
 - a. God is origin of all and transcendent authority (CCC 239).
 - b. God is absolute "goodness and loving care for all his children" (CCC 239).
 4. "God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood (cf. Is 66:13; Ps 131:2), which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature" (CCC 239).
 5. However, God is neither male nor female — He is God. God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. God is, however, "their origin and standard (cf. Ps 27:10; Eph 3:14; Is 49:15); no one is father as God is Father" (CCC 239).
 6. Jesus Christ has revealed that God is "eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: 'No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Mt 11:27)" (CCC 240).
 7. The apostles confess Jesus to be the Word who was with God from the beginning. Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15); as the 'radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature' (Heb 1:3)" (CCC 241).
 8. In the year 325 the first ecumenical council at Nicaea confessed "that the Son is 'consubstantial' with the Father, that is, one only God with him" (The English phrases "of one being" and "one in being" translate the Greek word *homoousios*, which was rendered in Latin by *consubstantialis*) (CCC 242).
- B. The Father and the Son are revealed by the Holy Spirit.**
1. The Holy Spirit reveals that God is Father and that Jesus is His Son when He is sent upon the apostles by the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father (CCC 244).
 2. At the second ecumenical council at Constantinople in 381 the Nicene Creed states, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father" (Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150)." Again this creed states, "With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150)" (CCC 245).
- II. The formulation of belief in the Trinity is found in 2 Corinthians 13:13, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:13; cf. 1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:4-6)" (CCC 249).**
- A. The Church uses special terms to attempt to articulate the dogma of the Trinity.**
1. "Substance," also called "nature" or "essence," "designate[s] the divine being in its unity" (CCC 252).
 2. "Person" or "hypostasis" "designate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them" (CCC 252).
 3. The term "relation" designates "the fact that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others" (CCC 252).
- B. The Trinity may be viewed from the perspective of the "economy of salvation" which pertains to the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit as well as God's eternal inner life, which is described as the "immanent Trinity." Immanence means activity which is accomplished from within.**

III. The Trinity is one.

- A. There is one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity” as confessed by the Council of Constantinople II in the year 553 (CCC 253).
- B. Each person of the Trinity is God whole and entire. The divine persons do not share (CCC 253).
- C. As in the words of the Council of Toledo XI in the year 675: “The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e., by nature one God’ (Council of Toledo XI [675]: DS 530:26)” (CCC 253).
- D. In the year 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council confessed, “‘Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature’ (Lateran Council IV [1215]: DS 804)” (CCC 253).

IV. The divine persons are really distinct from one another.

- A. “‘God is one but not solitary’ (*Fides Damasi*: DS 71)” (CCC 254).
- B. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “really distinct from one another” (CCC 254).
- C. The Fourth Lateran Council proclaimed, “‘It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds’ (Lateran Council IV [1215]: DS 804)” (CCC 254). “Begotten” means that what is brought forth is the same substance as the begetter.
- D. “The divine Unity is Triune” (CCC 254).

V. “The divine persons are relative to one another” (CCC 255).

- A. The true distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from one another “resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another” (CCC 255).
- B. The Council of Florence in 1442 proclaimed: “‘Everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship’ (Council of Florence [1442]: DS 1330)” (CCC 255).
- C. Again, the Council of Florence stated: “‘Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son’ (Council of Florence [1442]: DS 1331)” (CCC 255).

VI. The mystery of the Trinity is profoundly summarized by St. Gregory of Nazianzus while given to the catechumens of Constantinople:

“Above all guard for me this great deposit of faith for which I live and fight, which I want to take with me as a companion, and which makes me bear all evils and despise all pleasures: I mean the profession of faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I entrust it to you today. By it I am soon going to plunge you into water and raise you up from it. I give it to you as the companion and patron of your whole life. I give you but one divinity and power, existing one in three, and containing the three in a distinct way. Divinity without disparity of substance or nature, without superior degree that raises up or inferior degree that casts down ... the infinite co-naturality of three infinities. Each person considered in himself is entirely God ... the three considered together.... I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendor. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me ...’ (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40; 41: PG 36, 417)” (CCC 256).