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✚ SCRIPTURE

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✚ SCRIPTURE

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✚ SCRIPTURE

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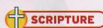
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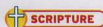


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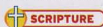


Galatians 3:26-28; Luke 15:1-2, 19:1-10, 22:21-23; Matthew 9:9-13

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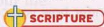
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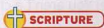


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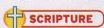


Luke 4:14-22, 18:18-30; Matthew 13:31-32

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GOD

Is Trinity



PRAYER

O God, help me have faith to understand you better.

What is God like?

How can I understand God?

Mark's dinner plate slowly rotated in the microwave. Coach's words had been turning around and around in his head the same way ever since his mom had driven him home from baseball practice. He wasn't quick enough. He wasn't paying attention. The coach had picked on one thing after another in front of the whole team as they slogged through the field in the drizzling rain.

Mom and his sister, Cesseli, were cleaning up the kitchen together while having some tense discussion about a note from one of her teachers. "I have to call Cesseli's teacher before it



gets too late," Mom apologized, and gave him a hug as they left the room. "We can all have dessert in the family room together afterward, okay?"

Yeah, great, Mark thought, not in a mood for cake or talking. Slowly chewing his mushy leftovers, Mark stared into the den where his dad was working at the computer. His eyes fell on the family portrait hanging there. It had been taken at his grandparents' anniversary party last summer. Everyone was smiling that day. Mom was looking at Dad with a special look that said she was both proud and relieved at how well everything had turned out.

Mark remembered how excited Dad had been to plan just the right celebration together. Mom had spent hours cooking and creating decorations. They had asked Mark to put together a slideshow telling the story of his grandparents' lives and how much their marriage meant to everyone. The portrait now made him think about how his family had always been there and would always be there for each other.

As he put his plate in the sink, Mark saw that his dad had left the den to join his mom and sister on the sofa. They were relaxed now that Mom's phone call with Cesseli's teacher had cleared things up. Mark smiled and then tossed his soggy baseball glove on the stairs and joined them.



ACTIVITY

LET'S BEGIN Discuss the relationships in this story. Beyond worries and stresses, what keeps Mark's family going? How do they manage? What draws Mark to join his parents and sister?

- **What are some different items in your home that show your family and its history?**
Why are these items on display? How does having a history together make a difference?

GOD IS ALWAYS THERE

Focus How do we get to know God?

Have you ever ended up with a problem turning around and around in your head, not sure what to do about it? With so much going on, you might not think of turning to a family member. You might wonder how others could even understand what you are feeling, much less help you. Sometimes family and friends can help. Different individuals within a family relate to each other in love—over time and through difficult times.

God is always there, even when you don't think family and friends can help much. The sure guide through the ups and downs of life is our faith in his presence and in his words.

God Takes the First Step God created the universe and keeps it going through Jesus Christ, the Word who has existed forever, and through the Holy Spirit, the giver of all life and goodness. We know God because he chooses to show himself to us. If it were left totally up to us, we could never really know the true God, because he is a mystery beyond our own comprehension. Only with faith can we begin to know God.

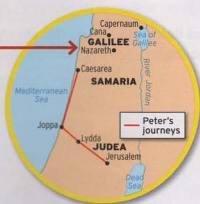
Fortunately, God doesn't wait for us to make the first move. He has been there from the beginning of time and he is with us from the first day of our life. He understands us, even when we don't understand him. On our own, we would be stuck in misunderstanding and confusion. We would never get close enough to God to understand the truth. But he loves us so much he wants us to know the way. God the Father sent us his Son and the Holy Spirit to help us find our way to him. Whenever God sends his Son to us, he also sends his Spirit.

WHERE IT HAPPENED



WHERE DID the disciples think Jesus was sending them? Peter traveled from Jerusalem after Pentecost to Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea. He lived in Antioch for a while, and in Rome, where he preached the message before being martyred.

The disciple Paul traveled widely to proclaim the Good News. On his first journey, Paul sailed from Antioch to Cyprus and regions that are now in Turkey. On his second and third journeys, he traveled through Asia Minor and Greece, eventually returning to Jerusalem.



Help from Heaven The Son of God came down from heaven to show us the way to God the Father and to bring salvation to all.

✚ SCRIPTURE When his earthly mission was accomplished, Jesus returned to his heavenly Father. Before he left, Jesus told his Apostles to continue his work, sharing his message of hope and new life to people everywhere. He instructed them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . .” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus told them to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He promised his friends he would always be with them.

Jesus is always with us, too. When we are baptized, we become members of God’s family, the Church, and receive the gift of faith. Through faith, we can believe in and rely on God, even though we don’t completely understand.

So help from heaven does not stop with Jesus’ time on earth, his public ministry, and his Ascension. Through the Apostles, Christ established the Church. He sent the Holy Spirit as a guide and counselor to the Church. Since the time of Jesus and the Apostles, believers have proclaimed God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



ACTIVITY

SHARE YOUR FAITH Think about the following questions and share your thoughts with a partner.

- ▶ Who or what helps you maintain your relationship with God? When have you felt closest to God in the last six months?

CHAPTER Words of Faith

Blessed Trinity

grace

✚ SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

To get the full story of Jesus’ commissioning of the Apostles, read **Matthew 28:16–20**. This gathering took place soon after Jesus’ Resurrection. How do you think the Apostles felt about Jesus’ words? If you had been with Jesus in this story, what would you have asked him? How do Jesus’ words speak to you as a member of the Church?

- ▼ *The Disciples Attempt to Fish in Lake Tiberias without Success,* from the Predis Codex by Cristoforo de Predis (mid-1400s)

THREE DIVINE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Focus How can we understand a mystery?

SCRIPTURE

GO TO THE SOURCE

Read **John 10:31–38** to find out how some people could not understand the relationship between Jesus and God the Father. If you had been there, what questions would you have asked Jesus about the mystery of the Trinity?

At the beginning of every Mass, we make the Sign of the Cross and say, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Our belief in three Persons in one God is the center of our celebration. When we pray at Mass, we pray in the name of our Trinitarian God. We base our faith on this central belief.

Christians use a special description for God. We describe God as the **Blessed Trinity**, which means that there is only *one* God in three divine Persons.

- ▶ The Father is God, the first Person of the Trinity, who brings everything into existence by the Son through the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Jesus Christ the Son is God, the second Person of the Trinity, who was sent by the Father and became man.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is also God, the third Person of the Trinity, who comes from the Father and the Son.

It’s somewhat like your family. You and your dad and mom are unique individuals, but are inseparable as one family. The three members of the Blessed Trinity are distinct from one another, so we can talk about them as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but are inseparable in what they do. Each member of the Trinity is fully God and has the same divine nature. There is only one God in three divine Persons.




How Can This Be? The Blessed Trinity is a mystery. We are never going to understand this mystery until we meet God face-to-face in heaven. Meanwhile, the gift of faith assures us that what Christians know about the Blessed Trinity is true.

Being human, we still ask questions and search for answers. As people of faith, we often are guided in our relationships by our heart, not only by our head. Despite his hard times as a baseball player, Mark remembered the joy his family felt in planning the anniversary party for his grandparents. He recognized that the love they felt for each other grew and spread throughout his family. This love made his family stronger than they could be individually.

Our relationship with God is something like this, too. When we sense God's presence and respond to him in our lives, he responds back with love. When we place our trust in his love, we feel it in our heart, and we come to believe in it and know it with our mind.

Love is *the* answer to the mystery of the Trinity. The truth is that the Son loves the Father and the Father loves the Son. The Holy Spirit shares his exact same love with both the Father and the Son.

This love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a model for the connections, affection, and bonds we can make with one another. Human communities such as families, schools, and groups of friends can mirror the unity of the Trinity.

 **When have you felt really loved by God? Out of touch with his love?**



We use comparisons from our life experience to talk about and describe God. However, our comparisons are limited. They do not capture the true mystery of God. So, God is *like* a human parent, a strong father, a loving mother, someone who has our best interests at heart, someone who makes sacrifices for our benefit. But God is also different from a parent. Even though we speak of God as "Father," the mystery of God goes beyond any human experience or worldly images we use.

ACTIVITY

CONNECT YOUR FAITH Think of three friends or family members. Write something about your friendship with each person, including how that friendship differs from the other two. Is your faith a part of any of these friendships? If so, how? If not, how can you share your beliefs with your friends?



✓CHECK THIS OUT!

To be in relationship with God means I should know and obey his laws. But there are lots of other rules from other sources. What about my parents' rules? What about the laws of our country and our state?

The authority of our parents comes from God's authority, so parents and children need to honor their relationship in a loving way, as the Fourth Commandment tells us. Civil authority (the authority of our government) also comes from God's authority and his care for all people. Those who govern us do it as a service for the good of all. Those in charge of governments should uphold the rights and dignity of all citizens and should also promote justice and peace.

GOD'S PLAN FOR US

Focus How does the Trinity work?

The three Persons of the Blessed Trinity work together through their relationship with each other something like the way a loving family works together for the same goals. The Father sent the Son on his mission of salvation. The Son acted in obedience to the Father to set humanity free from sin. The Holy Spirit comes to help us be part of a loving relationship as members of the Church.

The work of all three relates to God's plan of loving goodness. God does have a plan for all his children. He wants us to know and share in his love, to bring his goodness and love to others. He desires us to become like him, and so he cares for us and guides us with his wisdom and love. The Father works through the Son, his Holy Spirit, the Church, and the actions of people to help us. God doesn't give up on us. He continues to show his care and act on our behalf.

The unity, love, and goodness within the Blessed Trinity radiate outward toward all. This outpouring reaches its peak when the Trinity shares his own life and special helps with us. We call this sharing of divine life **grace**. God offers us this free, undeserved gift so we can become his adopted children. Sometimes we do not feel God's love, even though it's there. Our own actions and stubbornness may block God out or make it difficult to feel his presence. But God's grace is still available to us—if we trust in him and his hopes for us. Then, our lives can get back on course, going in the right direction.



Home Is Where the Heart Is The gift of faith is like a compass that points us in the right direction. If we stay directed by faith, then our actions will build up God's kingdom. Our lives will show Gospel values such as justice, peace, and love.

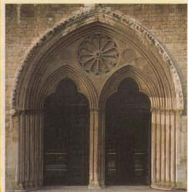
This is why it is so important to learn and remember what we believe. The teachings of our Catholic faith help us understand and strengthen our relationships with God and others. We are to give our minds, hearts, and lives to God in love and for love. As long as your life is moving in God's direction in that relationship with him, you will be journeying into deeper truth, wisdom, and love. You will be on your way home.

1 Imagine that your life is a story in a book. In what ways is the story of your life following God's love and the teachings of faith?

2 What would you like to change about the way you are living in order to follow the guidance of faith more closely?

LOOKING BACK

In the Middle Ages, most people couldn't read. Churches used stained-glass windows and architecture to teach important truths of faith such as the Blessed Trinity. The doorways below are an example. The single triangular arch holds within it three interlocking circular arches. In the same way, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three in one.



ACTIVITY

LIVE YOUR FAITH If you give your mind, heart, and life to God, you are journeying into a deeper truth, wisdom, and love. Reflect on what these ideas mean by answering the questions below.

1. What does it mean to you to give your mind to God?
2. What is one way you have given your heart to God?
3. Who is someone you know who gives his or her life to God? How do you see that he or she has done this?

IN SUMMARY

CATHOLICS BELIEVE

As Catholics, believing in the Blessed Trinity is central to our faith.

- The Trinity is a mystery that can never be totally understood by the human mind, but can be approached through faith. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit to help us know him and to guide us to him.

- The love that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have for each other shows us what our own relationships should be like.
- God has a plan of loving goodness for all his people and offers the gift of grace so that we can become more like him. This sharing in divine life helps us trust in God, have faith in him, and work for his kingdom.



MEDITATION ON PRAISING THE TRINITY

Leader: We gather here this day
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Prepare yourselves to be in Jesus' presence.

Close your eyes and focus on opening your mind and heart to God.

Take a deep, relaxing breath, and enter into the meditation:

(read the following, slowly and meditatively)

Reader 1: O God, our Father,
creator,
and maker of all creation,
we praise you, and we bless you! *(pause)*

We thank you for this good earth,
the air we breathe,
the rain that cools our nights,
the sun that warms our days,
and the life you give to each and every one of us. *(pause)*

Reader 2: O God the Son,
our brother, teacher,
and Savior,
we praise you, and we bless you! *(pause)*

We thank you for showing us the way to live,
to trust in the Father and to love one another,
to serve our sisters and brothers,
and to take care of the poor and those in need. *(pause)*

Reader 3: O God the Spirit,
Our Holy guide,
and friend for the journey,
we praise you, and we bless you!

We thank you for walking with us,
in our struggles,
our choosing,
our playing, and in our praying. *(pause)*

Open your eyes and let us pray together, in song.



"We Praise You"

David Haas, © 2002, GIA Publications, Inc.

REVIEW

A Work with Words Complete each sentence with the correct term.

1. Jesus gave the disciples a command to go and make _____ of all nations.
2. Christ established the _____ through the Apostles.
3. God the Father sends his Son to us; he also sends the _____.
4. The Holy Spirit is a _____ to the Church.
5. The love in the _____ is a model for the connections and love we can have with others.

Word Bank

Blessed Trinity
disciples
miracles
Holy Spirit
counselor
Father
Gospel
Church

B Check Understanding Circle the letter of the choice that best completes the sentence.

6. Christians describe God as the _____, meaning one God in three Persons.
a. Father
b. Holy Spirit
c. Blessed Trinity
d. a and b
7. The Persons of the Blessed Trinity are _____.
a. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
b. Jesus and the Holy Spirit
c. Matthew, Mark, and Luke
d. Paul, Silas, and Timothy
8. Through _____, the free, undeserved gift of God's love and life, we can become God's children.
a. faith
b. grace
c. hope
d. baptism
9. _____ is the second Person of the Trinity.
a. God, the Father
b. God, the Son
c. The Holy Spirit
d. all of the above
10. Through the sacrament of _____, we become members of God's Church.
a. the Eucharist
b. Confirmation
c. the Holy Spirit
d. Baptism

C Make Connections: Draw Conclusions Write a one-paragraph response to the questions.

What is God's plan of goodness and love? How does grace fit into God's plan of loving goodness?

OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

WHAT NOW?

- ★ Think about how you treat others.
- ★ Resolve to show others the love and interest God shows you.
- ★ When you make the Sign of the Cross, think about what the words and gestures mean.
- ★ Reflect on what your image of God is.

ACTIVITY

LIVE YOUR FAITH Think of a dilemma you faced recently. How do you see that God showed his care for you in the solution to your problem?

Write one descriptive word for each Person in the Trinity. Then list a circumstance when you would pray to that Person.

God		
the Father	the Son	the Holy Spirit
Description	Description	Description
Circumstance	Circumstance	Circumstance



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PRAYER

God, show me your way.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Saint Frances of Rome

Starting when she was just eleven years old, St. Frances of Rome had a very special three-way relationship with

God and with the Roman people she served by her good deeds. You could think of her as a living example of the Trinity of God.

Frances was born in Rome in 1384 to a wealthy, noble family. She learned to have a peaceful personality and a serious devotion to God from her mother. From her father, however, she inherited a strong will. That will gave her the strength to devote her life to helping people less fortunate than herself.

On the orders of her father, she married Lorenzo Poniziani at the age of thirteen. He was noble and wealthy, and he loved her very much. Her mother-in-law pressured Frances to entertain as part of Rome's social scene, but her heart was with the city's poor people.

Frances and her sister-in-law Vannoza became close friends, and prayed together. They visited prisons to give comfort and served in hospitals. It was not fashionable for noblewomen to help the poor, and people gossiped about two girls out alone. However, Lorenzo supported his wife's efforts and did not try to stop her from doing the work of God.

In the early 1400s, a flood brought disease and famine to Rome. Frances and Vannoza went out to the poor with corn, wine, oil, and clothing from their family's possessions. Her father-in-law tried to stop her, but a miracle happened. The family's empty corn loft suddenly filled with corn and their empty wine cask was full. These incidents completely converted Lorenzo and his father.

With her husband's and father-in-law's blessings, Frances sold her jewels and clothes and distributed money to the needy. When civil war came to Rome, Frances' house was destroyed. She was able to fix it up, and she turned it into a hospital and a homeless shelter.

After the war was over, Frances started a lay order of women attached to the Benedictines called the Oblates of Mary. The women lived in the world but pledged to offer themselves to God and to serve the poor. They bought a house where the widowed members could live in community.

After Lorenzo's death, Frances moved into the house with the other Oblates and was made mother superior. At the age of fifty-two, she fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a nun. She died four years later. Her last words were, "The angel has finished his task—he beckons me to follow him."



▲ *Madonna and Child with Saint Frances of Rome*, by Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639)

GLOBAL DATA



- Rome is the capital of Italy and its third largest city.
- Rome is the home of the Roman Catholic Church and the pope.
- Rome is built on seven hills overlooking the Tiber River.
- Rome was once the center of a vast empire stretching from England to the Middle East.