

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

Interested in learning more about the Catholic Tradition? Are you looking for a pressure-free, non-judgmental environment where you can learn about Catholicism? Had a bad previous experience while looking into the faith? Want a fresh start? Perhaps you are searching quietly and need some answers. Get all of your questions answered! **It is still not too late to join us** Monday evenings from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria, the Holy Grill. You do not have to journey alone! Call Pat or Gary Norris at 513.677.5379. Further inquiry can also be communicated through harmonic10@aol.com.

What we are doing now. The catechetical process consists of four periods leading to receiving the sacraments of initiation and beyond into a final period called the neophyte year or mystagogy. This first period is called the pre-catechumenate and will extend until late November when candidates declare their intention to the Church. The first period consists of inquiry on the part of the "inquirer" or "candidates" and of evangelization and the pre-catechumenate on the part of the Church. During this time, the RCIA team gives a suitable explanation of salvific events and the Gospel and provides an opportunity to experience the company and spirit of Christians in our community. Inquirers are seeking the truth and the team transmits the words and deeds of revelation. There are no liturgical rites in this period because inquirers have not yet entered into a formal relationship with the Church through the Rite of Acceptance. All inquirers have been given a binder full of conversion stories, informational articles about our faith and examples of common Catholic prayers. Many of the questions asked early on are being answered and some are addressed specifically.

Catechism for All of Us...

In order to develop a relationship with God we must learn of Him. Once we come to know Him then we will want to love Him. As we know him more deeply, we love him more deeply; we will then want to serve Him so that we might be happy with Him in heaven for all eternity. *This is the meaning of human life:* to know God, to love God, to serve God that we might be happy with Him in heaven for all eternity. So in RCIA, we explored the question: Who is God? We discussed the existence of God, the various attributes of God, God as Creator and Blessed Trinity.

The One God is three divine Persons in One Divine substance, each having one intellect and one will, each having the fullness of the divine nature, who live in a perfect communion of love. This is the central mystery of our faith. When we say mystery we mean a truth of faith that we could not know unless God revealed it; once it is known, it is understandable and reasonable, but is never fully comprehensible. Early in Genesis, God is revealed as a community of persons: "Then God said, "Let *us* make man in our image, after *our* likeness"..." (*Gen 1:26*). The Father eternally pours Himself out; His Word is the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son. The Son is totally in the Father and the Father is totally in the Son. The Father is eternally begetting the Son. The Son eternally pours all His love into the Father. This expression of love *is* the Holy Spirit, thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Trinity, God reveals Himself as a communion of persons, a family, whose life is love.

God is the eternal, unchanging, uncreated personal Being. Truth, goodness and beauty define the inner life of Trinitarian love, the mindset of God. This knowledge is only revealed to us by Jesus Christ. "*All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*" (*Luke 10:22*) However, God is a mystery to us and is infinitely rich; we can only scratch the surface of knowing him due to our limitations of time, our ability to conceive things in our minds and our limitations on love.

God reveals his name to Moses, *"I Am Who Am."* (Ex 3:1-15). God is the beginning cause of all things but is uncreated Himself, the First Cause. **God is One.** God revealed Himself to Israel as the one true God: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might."* (Dt 6:4-5). Love is a decision, an act of the will. To love God in this way is the first of the great commandments. Jesus tells us that *"I and the Father are one."* (Jn 10:30) **God is Eternal.** God has always existed; there was never a time when he was not, nor there ever a time when he is not. **God is transcendent,** He exists outside of time. *"Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One?"* (Hb 1:12). **God is Almighty.** *In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical.* (CCC 271). **God is Truth.** *"God is light and in him there is no darkness at all"* (1 Jn 1:5) **God is Love.** God tells us *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."* (Jer 31:3). Most importantly he *"showed his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."* (Rom 5:8)

The Father is our Creator, the Son is our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier. God the Father is the first origin of everything. *Creation is the foundation of "all God's saving plans," the "beginning of the history of salvation" that culminates in Christ.* (CCC 280) Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the *hands of the Creator. The universe was created "in a state of journeying" toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it.* (CCC 302) He lovingly cares for his children, drawing them to him in mercy.

The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is not created by the Father but begotten of the Father. He is completely divine and coequal with the Father. On the divine level he is the Son of God. The Son entered time, became Jesus Christ and took on human nature through the Virgin Mary to accomplish our salvation; he becomes the new Adam. He is fully human, a man like us in all ways but sin. Jesus could be hungry and he could be tempted. He is the Son of Man. His sacrifice of his Passion and Death are the fullest sign of the total self-giving nature of God's love. Faith in Him is the path to Heaven.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is coequal with the Father and the Son, in an eternal exchange of love. He is the Lord and Giver of Life and the Sanctifier. *The Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of His Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may "bear much fruit".* (CCC 737) And so we also see the Holy Spirit as the principal author of Sacred Scripture.

Believing in one true God who is immanent, transcendent, relational, almighty, gracious, merciful and loving has many consequences in our lives. Because of his almighty power and sovereignty, faith means we have to put him first place in our lives and serve Him. We are to remember that no matter what we do; God will give us perfect love.

The most common Catholic gesture is the Sign of the Cross. Catholics make the Sign of the Cross by touching their foreheads, hearts, left then right shoulders with the tips of their fingers while saying, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". When possible, the fingers are dipped in holy water before making the Sign of the Cross. In making the Sign of the Cross, we proclaim the abundance of the mysteries it signifies: the Trinity of Persons whom we name as one God, that the Son who came to earth in the Incarnation suffered for us even to the point of sacrificing himself on the cross, the sure hope of redemption from sin that flows from the cross, and our original baptismal promises.

Asked and Answered. What does transcendent and immanent mean as we use them to describe God? By transcendent we mean that God is beyond all creation; all ideas and speech about God cannot fully understand or describe him. Our human words always fall short of the

mystery of God. We must continually purify our language insofar as it is image-bound and imperfect; we can never express the infinite mystery of God. By immanent we mean that God is intimately close to us. He is distinct from but present to us. He is in every cell of our being.

Read it for yourself. CCC paragraphs: 42, 239, 202, 232-237, 245-256, 258, 259, 260, 261.