

The Basics of Orthodoxy Class 101

St. Gregory of Nyssa Orthodox Church, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Topic 4 : The Holy Trinity (part two)

Review of previous class:

The **three candle flames** demonstration reinforces the following teachings:

- 1) There are Three co-eternal, co-equal Divine Persons
(show: three candles with three flames)
 Christ said: Go and baptize all nations “in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)
- 2) The Three are really Three very real Divine Persons co-existing together. The Trinity is **not** a set of different **roles** that one Person plays at different times— (i.e. today God acts as a “Father”; tomorrow He acts as a “Son”; later He acts as the “Holy Spirit”—that is the Sabellian heresy of modalism).
(the three candles with three real, distinct flames existing at the same time)
 At the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was fully revealed—Father in heaven; Son in the water below; Spirit as dove.
- 3) The Three Persons share the same one Divine Nature.
(it is the same fire on all three candles—the same content)
 Christ said: “I and My Father are one.” (John 10:30)
- 4) The Nature of the Son is equal to the Nature of the Father, because the Son shares the Father’s one Nature. (The same goes for the Holy Spirit.)
(the one candle gives its light completely to the other, without diminishing itself)

the Creed: “Light of Light, True God of True God”

the Creed in Greek says: “homoousios” -- “of one essence,” “consubstantial”

St. John taught that the Son was True God of True God (see 1 John 5:20)

The Son shares the Father’s Nature by forever and eternally being **begotten** of the Father (**not** being created by the Father).

The Holy Spirit shares the Father’s Nature by forever and eternally **proceeding** from the Father.

Jesus used the phrase “**only begotten**” of Himself in John 3:16.

He used the phrase “**proceeds from the Father**” in John 15:26, when talking about the Holy Spirit.

- 5) Each Divine Person possesses the fullness (the whole) of the Divine Nature.
 The Trinity is not the sum of three smaller parts. (NOT $1/3 + 1/3 + 1/3 = \text{God}$)
(each candle flame is a complete and full and entire flame.)

St. Paul taught that in Christ Jesus “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Colossians 2:9)

Christ said to His Father: “All that is Mine is Thine and all that is Thine is Mine.” (John 17:10)

- 6) We are to honor the Son “as we honor the Father” because Each Person has the same complete Divinity.
(the light of the second candle is as equally genuine light and fire as that of the first candle—we think of each candle equally)

Christ said: “It is My Father Who honors Me, of Whom you say that He is your God.” (John 8:54)

Christ said: “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (John 5:22-23)

- 7) The Son does the works that only God can do—He does the works of the Father. Since the Son has the Father’s Nature, the Son does *exactly* what the Father does—(like raise the dead, see John 5:20-21)
(the flame of the second candle gives just as much heat and light as the first)

Christ said: “‘The Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He...said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” (John 5:17-18)

Christ said: “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

- 8) The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. (And the same for the Holy Spirit). The Three are always together, always **interpenetrating** Each Other, and never are apart from Each Other. (St. Symeon’s quote: *The Faith*, p.60)
(the three flames, when held together, are also one flame—fully interpenetrating each other)

Christ said to Philip: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?” (John 14:10)

Christ said: “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

- 9) Each Person of the Trinity exists by the ***complete gift*** of Himself to the Other Two Persons in an unbroken and perfect eternal communion of love.
(the three candle flames form an *unbroken and perfect union*)

Christ said to His Father: “All that is Mine is Thine and all that is Thine is Mine.” (John 17:10)

Christ said to Philip: “Do you not believe that *I am in the Father*, and the *Father in Me*?” (John 14:10)

Christ said to His Father: “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” (John 17:1) (Each Person glorifies the Other in love.)

The Father, as the eternal source and fountainhead of the Other Two Persons, eternally is bestowing “the fullness of His being on His Son and His Spirit,” forever giving Himself completely to the Other Two in love. The Son and the Spirit, in turn, are forever returning this love to the Father, and exchanging it with Each Other, “forming an unbreakable unity of love. In this way, each of the Persons is said to exist in the Others. It is impossible to conceive of One Person without thinking of the Other Two Persons.” (Clark, *The Faith*, p. 56.)

God is **not** a self-contained isolated individual—the ultimate Ego, the ultimate Narcissist—but since “God is love” (1 John 4:8), God is personal. And since “love means the total gift of oneself to another” (Clark, *The Faith*, p.57), God is forever begetting a Son Whom He can love, and in love is forever breathing forth His Spirit, Whom He also loves. Thus, God is Tri-personal.

Just as the Son needs a Father, so too the Father, to be eternally a “Father”, needs an eternal “Son”—Who is also known as His Logos, or Word. Without His Word, the Father is ‘voiceless’ and without His Spirit (in Greek “breath”), the Father is “breathless.”

- 10) There is only one God, not three “gods”—because of the One Nature, One Will, and One Power that the Father gives and shares with the Son and the Spirit.
(three candles—same fire—always united)

St. Gregory of Nyssa’s quote:

“There is one and the same Person of the Father, from Whom the Son is begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeds. He is the cause of those persons who are caused by Him; and therefore we rightly assert one God, since He co-exists with them. For the persons of the Godhead are not divided from each other in time, place, will, occupation, activity, or any qualifications of this sort, the distinguishing marks observed in human beings. The only distinction here is that the Father is father, not son; the Son is son, not father; similarly the Holy Spirit is neither father nor son.”
(*The Faith*, p. 59)

Father, Son, & Holy Spirit:

Three Divine Persons

One Divine Nature Jesus said: “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)**One** Power**One** occupation**One** activityAlways **together**, never separated by time or place**One** Will Jesus said: “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do.” (John 5:19)Tom, Rick, and Harry:

three human persons

one human nature (each is fully human)

have **three** separate powerscan have **three** different occupationscan do **three** different activities

can be separated by time;

can be separated by place--be in **three** different places—not always togetherhave **three wills**—can each do his “own thing”

- 11) The begetting of the Son and the proceeding forth of the Holy Spirit take place in eternity, not in time. The Trinity exists in eternity, outside of time and before creation.

Christ said: “O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:5)

Note: Time is part of creation. $E=mc^2$. “In the Beginning...” Genesis 1:1

The Holy Trinity in the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:26 “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.”

Psalms 33:6 “By the **Word** of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the **Breath** of His mouth.”

Christ is the Logos (the “Word”); the Holy Spirit is the Breath. (in Greek “breath” can mean “Spirit”)

Genesis 18:1-5 “The LORD appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, **three** Men stood by him: and when he saw **Them**, he ran to meet **Them** from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, ‘**My Lord**, if now I have found favor in **Thy** sight, pass not away, I pray **Thee**, from **Thy** servant: Let a little water, I pray **You**, be fetched, and wash **Your** feet, and rest **Yourselves** under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort **Ye** Your hearts; after that **Ye** shall pass on: for therefore are **Ye** come to **Your** servant.’ And **They** said, ‘So do, as thou hast said.’”

Note: “the constant interplay between the singular and the plural. The **Lord** appears to Abraham, and yet he sees **three** Men. He addresses Them at one point in the **singular**, and later in the **plural**.” (*The Faith*, p.62) “Thee” “Ye” “My Lord” “They said”

Isaiah 6:1-3 The Prophet Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision. Angels cried unceasingly to each other: “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of armies!”

“Holy” for the Father. “Holy” for the Son. “Holy” for the Holy Spirit. Three distinct Persons. Yet, the same word “Holy” for all Three, shows the Unity—One in Nature.