

Dear Sister(s),

The video you have received is entitled: THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE.

The intent of this presentation is to:

1. acquaint you with the struggle of the church in the fourth century to articulate Christian belief about God,
2. give an explanation of what the doctrine attempts to protect about our belief about God,
3. present a short explanation of the early heresies about the *Trinity* that the Fathers of the Church felt they needed to condemn, and
4. share some ways of thinking about *Trinity* in our daily prayer and life.

However, since this is not intended for *theologians*, the presentation covers only the basic explanations needed to understand where the *doctrinal formulation comes from, and what it means*. It is also important for you to know that this is NOT a video that will present a spirituality of *Trinity*. The *STUDY GUIDE* accompanying this video may give you a few ideas to pursue further on your own.

The video can be viewed individually or communally and the guide is simply a help to any reflection and discussion you or your group may wish to have.

The tape is approximately one hour long.

I hope that this is helpful for you. To become aware of the history of our tradition and to understand the beliefs that we have inherited and cherish from that tradition is so important.

Sincerely,

Sandy

Sister Sandra Ann Weinke, SSND
Presenter

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Study Guide to accompany the video

Introduction: This study guide is meant to give some suggestions for discussion or reflection after viewing the video *THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE*. It is not imperative that these particular questions be used. The important thing is that further thought and discussion is encouraged. Use whatever is helpful.

INTRODUCTION: Patricia Flynn, SSND, Project Coordinator (5 min)

PART I: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE 12 min

In stating that God is triune, early Christians were proposing that God possessed distinctions in the divine nature itself.
LaCugna, Catherine. GOD FOR US, p. 46.

BREAK

DISCUSSION 1:

- What has the early Christian experience of Jesus to do with the development of Trinitarian doctrine?
- Each Sunday at Liturgy we recite the *creed* which is essentially the same formulation that has come to us from the fourth century. What does this say about *tradition . . . unity*?

PART II: WHAT DOES THE DOCTRINE PROTECT? (WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?)
25 min

BREAK

DISCUSSION 2:

- What are the three truths about God that the doctrine is attempting to protect?
- Do you understand how the following heresies kept Christians *outside the fence* of an orthodox view of the Godhead?
 1. Subordinationism
 2. Arianism
 3. Tritheism
 4. Modalism
- Why does the word 'person' incorrectly describe the distinctions in God?
- What was totally new to your understanding of the doctrine?
- What questions would you like to have answered?

DISCUSSION 3:

- What was the most meaningful information about the Trinity? What do you think was most important or most enriching for your faith?
- If you had a chance to go into more depth, what questions would you pursue? What type of workshop would help you?

FOR FURTHER READING: The NAMA Theological Development folder has an extensive bibliography on Trinity. This should be helpful in your further study.

PART III: HOW WE IMAGE THE DIVINE (GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE) 12 min.

God is beyond the human mind. (Saint Augustine)

God is No-thing. (Meister Eckhart)

'God' is beyond God. (Paul Tillich)

No one has seen God. (Saint Paul)

WHAT DO THESE QUOTES MEAN TO YOU?

DISCUSSION 4: *Analogies have always been used to speak of the Trinity. Any words or images we use can never be taken literally. Even the words of the doctrine are human inventions used to explain what is beyond words.*

- Has the symbol of the ▲ been a helpful one for you?
- We are beginning to substitute new words for 'father', 'son', and 'holy spirit'. Using *SOURCE, WORD, and SPIRIT* moves away from male imagery. Using feminine terms, for example, *WOMB, WISDOM, LIFE* can inspire women's spirituality.
- Here are others that have been used in our tradition.
 1. *LOVER, BELOVED, LOVE* (St. Augustine)
 2. *MEMORY, UNDERSTANDING, WILL* (St. Augustine)
 3. *ROOT, SHOOT, FRUIT* (St. John Damascene)
 4. *SUN, RAY, LIGHT* (?)
 5. *WATER, WAVE, TIDE* (Jessica Powers)
- Have any creative ideas?

DISCUSSION 5: *The following quotes are 'Trinitarian'. How do they express the divine operations in God, or the distinctions within the Godhead?*

- ***God as LOVE, SPILLS OUT, and FILLS ALL.***
- ***God is the source of creative transformation.*** (John Cobb)
- ***The future is born in our deciding.*** (S. Mary V. Maher, SSND)
- ***God: the tender enfolded unfolding.***
- ***The fire which is the sun, the fire which is the earth, that fire is in my own heart.*** (The Upanishads, 6:17)
- ***We experience God as Creative Power, Saving Love, and Ecstatic Transformation.*** (Paul Tillich)
- ***That absolute Transcendent Power of Love comes to us in our Human Situation through the Divine Dynamism at the heart of all.*** (S. Sandra Ann Weinke, SSND)

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**MY FAVORITE QUOTE:**

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY *Study Guide*, page 3.

PART IV: MAKING TRINITY MEANINGFUL IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES. (SO WHAT?)

8 min

- The more you reflect on the Trinity and the ways that the divine is *before you*, *addressing you*, and *transforming you* in your life, the more the doctrine will influence your life and prayer.
- Can you see how this is true already? How would you pray to God as Trinity?
- How can the doctrine of the Trinity become more integrated into our lives as Christians?
- Bernard Lonergan has stated: *For the Lover of the Beloved, knowledge is bliss.*

WHEN CAN I ENTER AND SEE THE FACE OF GOD? *Psalms 42:2*

NOTES: