



It's Complicated

Read: Matthew 28:16-20

In Matthew 28:16-20, Christ reveals the Trinity to us when he tells the disciples to “Go” and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is essential to note that Jesus uses the word “name” in the singular form. This is to indicate that there are not three “gods” but only one God, operating in three different persons. So how does this all work?

Well it's complicated, but the theology of the Church teaches that in God there is one being, two processions, three persons, and four relations. Let's break that down.

1. The one being (essence) refers to the Divinity of God and is shared equally and undivided in each of the three persons.
2. The two processions refer to generation, by which (1) the Son proceeds from the Father, and (2) the Holy Spirit proceeds (as an act of love) and is sent by the Father and Son.
3. The three persons are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. The relations refer to the interaction between each person of the Trinity. The Father's relationship with the Son is paternal. The Son's relationship with the Father is filial. The Holy Spirit is the love shared between the Father and Son. This is an active love on behalf of the Father and Son and passive on behalf of the Holy Spirit (who is the one sent, not the sender).

What distinguishes each person in the Trinity is their relational role to each other. The Father is creator, the Son redeemer, the Spirit sanctifier. The fulness of the Godhead is fully active in each person of the Trinity, but is exercised in a unique way by each individual person. That is what distinguishes the persons. Although this is complex and mysterious, it is important to know, because it is central to our faith and mission.