

Ten After Ten: Chapter Ten --- The Father

232 Christians are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Before receiving the sacrament, they respond to a three-part question when asked to confess the Father, the Son, and the Spirit... The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity.

233 Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their names, for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son, and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.

234 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life... the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the hierarchy of the truths of faith.

236 The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*)... God’s works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions.

237 The Trinity is a mystery of faith... which can never be known unless they are revealed by God. (God’s) inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel’s faith before the Incarnation of God’s Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

238 Many religions invoke God as “Father”... inasmuch as he is Creator of the world. Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, “his first-born son.” Most especially he is “the Father of the poor,” of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection.

239 By calling God “Father,” the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children... He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father.

240 Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father.

241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus... as “the image of the invisible God”; as the “radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature.”

242 Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is “consubstantial” with the Father, that is, one only God with him. The second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381 confessed “the only-begotten Son

of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father.

243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of “another Paraclete” (Advocate), the Holy Spirit... The Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them into all the truth. The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.

244 The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus’ glorification reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

245 The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature.... Yet he is not called the Spirit of the Father alone,... but the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. The Creed of the Church from the Council of Constantinople confesses: “With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.”

246 The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*).”

*The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: “The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration.... And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.”

247 The affirmation of the *filioque* does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447... The use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). The introduction of the *filioque* into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

248 At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father’s character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he “who proceeds from the Father,” it affirms that he comes from the Father through the Son. The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). It says this, legitimately and with good reason, for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as the principle without principle, is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds. This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.