

# THE MYSTERIES

## Introduction:

Everything we have said about God so far could (and should) be affirmed by the powers of our natural intelligence alone. Yet we know many other things about God through Revelation, things that are impossible to know except through Faith. These are the mysteries.

## A. Mysteries in general:

### I. DEFINITION OF MYSTERIES

A mystery is a truth which is absolutely certain, which we must believe in order to be saved (because God has revealed it) but which, by its very nature, is beyond the powers of our intelligence.

#### Note:

- That a mystery is not mysterious in itself - indeed, it is quite simple and luminous - but it is because of us that it is partly hidden (mystery = hidden, in Greek)
- That it is not at all contradictory or absurd (as Luther said: "*Credo quia absurdum*" "*I believe because it is absurd*")
- But that we can never understand it, that is, exhaust its intelligible richness
- That we must, however, try to grasp as much as possible... in order to advance in the Faith.

### II. WHY ARE THERE MYSTERIES?

Divine truths are mysteries because God is the great mystery. And there is no mystery except because God is there, in His infinite richness (Saint Paul: "*He dwells in an inaccessible light*"). Because God is mysterious, a religion without mystery would certainly be false.

**Mystery is like a mathematical equation in which God is the great unknown.**

### III. THE PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES OF OUR RELIGION

It is God's infinity that makes these self-evident truths mysterious.

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|-----------------------|--|
| ▪ <b>Trinity:</b>     | <b>One God in three persons</b>                  |
| ▪ <b>Incarnation:</b> | <b>Son of God made man</b>                       |
| ▪ <b>Redemption:</b>  | <b>Death of the Son of God redeeming all men</b> |

### IV. THERE ARE OTHER MYSTERIES...

- **God's grace is a mystery.** It does everything ("*Without Me, you can do NOTHING*" John 15:6). We remain free when we act by God's grace...
- **Hell is a mystery:**
  - Of suffering, because it is the definitive loss of God.
  - Of justice, because the sinner has refused God.
- **The Holy Mass and the Eucharist are mysteries** ("*contains*" God...)
- ...

## B. The mystery of the Holy Trinity:

### I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS:

- Trinity means three in one (trine = 3; unity = 1).
- This word does not appear in the New Testament. Regardless, it is the reality that is there.

- This mystery was revealed by Jesus Christ Himself and was unknown to the people of the Old Testament, even though there are hints of these three persons in God:
  - “*Let us make man in our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26).
  - Abraham saw three angels and worshipped only one.
  - The angels proclaim God seated on his throne as addressing three: “*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.*” (Is.6:3).

## II. DEFINITIONS:

- **THE NATURE** of a being (or its ESSENCE or SUBSTANCE) is what that being IS.

We are human beings - a dog is a dog - a car is a car...

We know that in God, this nature (unique, otherwise there would be several Gods = polytheism) is to EXIST.

- **THE PERSON** IS THE SUBJECT OF ATTRIBUTION, which enables us to say “I”.

We can see that in human beings, this is different from nature, since we all have the same nature and we are all different people (with our personal qualities, faults, merits, sins, etc.).

Definition of the human person by Boethius (≈480-524): “*An individuated substance of a reasonable nature*”<sup>1</sup>.

**III. WE THEREFORE AFFIRM WITH THE WHOLE GOSPEL THAT THERE IS IN GOD: DE FIDE: ONE NATURE**, (this is consubstantiality: unity and identity of substance between the three Persons) and **THREE PERSONS**: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

May we try to understand a little?

### ❖ **God is intelligent. God knows Himself.**

- And every functioning intelligence produces a VERB (a word). Starting with our own word.
- God, knowing Himself, speaks an eternal word: the Son of God, the Word (“*The Father begets the Son*”).
- The whole nature of the Father, who knows Himself, passes into His Son, Who is the Known (unique) divine nature.
- This remains mysterious, since the Son is a person (subject of appropriation).

### ❖ **God loves Himself infinitely.**

This (unique) nature of God, loved by the Father and the Son, is the Holy Ghost = the divine nature infinitely loved by God Himself... (“*The Father and the Son spirit the Holy Spirit*”).

## IV. APPROPRIATIONS (Scripture reading grid):

- All the works that God does outside Himself (“*ad extra*”, i.e. all except His internal processions: knowledge and love in God) are common to the three divine persons. Indeed, since they are to be attributed to divine Nature (principle of operation) which is common to all three persons.
- However, Scripture most often attributes these works to one of the persons. By chance? No! But respecting the proper place of each person in the Trinity. For example:
  - Since the Father is the PRINCIPLE OF THE OTHER PERSONS, but has no principle Himself, we attribute to Him the works of POWER (Creation, the greatest miracles, etc.).
  - Since the Son proceeds from the Father by way of INTELLIGENCE, we attribute to Him all the works of WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE (the order of the world, judgment, etc.).
  - Since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son by way of LOVE, we attribute to Him all the works of CHARITY and SANCTIFICATION (Incarnation, Redemption, Inhabitation in the souls of the just, gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.).

**Conclusion: The three persons are strictly distinct, but equal, having the same and unique nature.**

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<sup>1</sup> New Testament texts that speak of the three persons.