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## We Believe in One God

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### CONCEPTS OF FAITH

**What do we call the three Persons in one God?**

The Holy Trinity.

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*Theological . . . studies offer the opportunity for a deeper knowledge of the Person of Christ. But this deeper knowledge does not depend only on our intellectual efforts. It is above all a gift of the Father who, through the Holy Spirit, allows us to know the Son. A person must be 'conformed to Christ' and not merely educated in the faith.*

POPE JOHN PAUL II

### Vocabulary

**person:** someone who has a mind and a will.

**human person:** someone who is created in the image of God with a mind, a will, and a body.

**mystery of faith:** a truth revealed by God that cannot be fully understood by the human mind.

**faith:** the power that God gives us that helps us believe what He reveals.

**theology:** the study of God using the Sacred Scriptures, the teachings of the Church, and reason.



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## A STORY OF FAITH

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*One man who studied about God and taught and wrote about the Holy Trinity was Saint Thomas Aquinas. Thomas was a priest. He is known today as a Doctor of the Church. This means that he was one of the greatest teachers of the Church. Read the following story about Saint Thomas Aquinas.*

### *Saint Thomas Aquinas*

**T**HOMAS AQUINAS was born in 1225. He was born of wealthy parents in the family castle in the town of Aquino, Italy. Thomas' parents were members of the nobility.

Although Thomas had a strong and sturdy body, like his father and six older brothers, he did not become a soldier as they had. Instead, Thomas was drawn to the religious life. Thomas was a very quiet boy. He was intelligent and inquisitive, always asking questions.

When Thomas was five years old, he went to live with the Benedictine monks at the Abbey of Monte Cassino. There he studied about God and learned about the religious life. He even wore a Benedictine habit. This didn't mean that he had to become a Benedictine monk, though that was what everyone expected.

When Thomas was fourteen years old, he returned home. A little later, he went to study at the University of Naples (Italy). While in Naples Thomas joined the Dominican Order, whose friars lived a life of poverty. Thomas' family greatly disapproved of this decision. They looked upon the Dominican friars with contempt. They had agreed to a religious life for Thomas if he went to the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, where most students came from wealthy and noble families. As a monk at the Abbey, backed by his family's influence, Thomas might become a bishop or even a pope. Thomas' family tried various measures to get him to change his mind and become a Benedictine. When even bribery didn't work, Thomas' family had him kidnapped and brought home. They locked Thomas in a tower of one of their castles for about seventeen months. They intended to keep him locked up until he changed his mind. But Thomas did not change his mind. Thomas didn't want the riches offered to him. He had promised to live in poverty. Finally, Thomas' family permitted him to return to the Dominican Order. Thomas made his way to Paris and there learned theology, philosophy, and science from Saint Albert the Great.

Thomas was a large man, and he was quiet and reserved. On first meeting him, fellow students thought Thomas was uninteresting and stupid, because of his size and quiet nature. They soon discovered, however, that Thomas was extremely intelligent, even a genius. He was a very mild and humble man and had an even temper. He did not show off and was always courteous, even when he strongly disagreed with someone. Albert the Great knew that Thomas would be a great teacher one day. Thomas was greatly inspired by Albert and eventually became an even greater teacher than Albert himself.

Thomas became a professor of theology. He spent his life teaching, writing books, meditating, and praying. Thomas would always pray before writing or teaching. His writings and teachings were brilliant and clear. In addition to writing books, Thomas wrote prayers. Once he wrote prayers to be said at the Mass on the feast of Corpus Christi. Saint Bonaventure had also composed Mass prayers for the same feast day. Both Thomas and Bonaventure were to read their prayers to the Pope and cardinals. The Pope and cardinals would then decide which man's prayers would be said at Mass. First, Thomas read the Mass prayers he had composed. Saint Bonaventure listened to Thomas' composition. He knew that the Mass prayers Thomas had composed were much better than his own. Without waiting for the Pope and the cardinals to decide which prayers to use, Saint Bonaventure quietly tore up his own composition.

When Thomas wrote his manuscripts, he dictated to several secretaries at the same time, in order to speed up the writing process. Though the writing was done at top speed, great care was used in making corrections.

The most famous of Thomas' writings is his *Summa theologiae*, which is his summary of Catholic theology. His study of God is divided into three parts: God, creation, and Christ. In his study Thomas used arguments both for and against a particular point. Then he gave a final and convincing argument that proved the truth he was seeking. The *Summa theologiae* is used in seminaries today throughout the world.

Thomas felt that what he had written was but straw, compared with the things God had revealed to him. Toward the end of his life, as Thomas knelt before a crucifix, he heard a voice from the crucifix say, "You have written well of Me, Thomas. What would you have as a reward?" Thomas replied, "Only Yourself, Lord."

Thomas died on March 7, 1274, near Terracina, Italy. Thomas was declared a saint in 1323. He is the patron saint of Catholic schools. His feast day is January 28.





### *The Holy Trinity*

Saint Thomas Aquinas used the Sacred Scriptures (the Bible), the teachings of the Church, and reason in his study of the Holy Trinity. We can do the same.

Using the Sacred Scriptures (the Bible), we can read about the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Here are two examples of Jesus teaching us about the Holy Trinity. In the first example, Jesus talks about God the Father. Jesus is God the Son. In the second example, Jesus talks about God the Holy Spirit.

*Jesus said to him [Thomas the Apostle], "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves."*

—John 14:6–11

*"The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you."*

—John 14:26

In the teachings of the Church we have the prayer called the "Apostles' Creed". In the "Apostles' Creed" we state what we believe as Catholics.