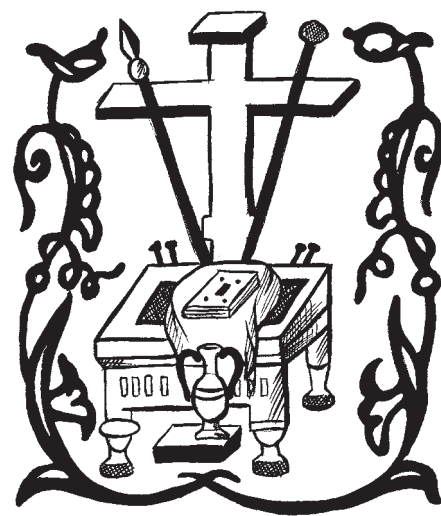


The Holy Trinity



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Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston

OUR COVER

The ink sketch icon on our cover is called “The Preparation of the Throne.” In our Church’s iconographic tradition, this is a highly symbolic depiction of the Holy Trinity, our Triune God; for the Throne symbolizes God the Father; the Book of the Gospels on the Throne, and the cross behind it, symbolize God the Son; and the Vessel of Holy Chrism on the pedestal in front of the Throne symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

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All icons in this pamphlet are courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA, 2009.

About the beginning of our Lord's thirtieth year, John the Forerunner, who was some six months older than our Saviour according to the flesh, and had lived in the wilderness since his childhood, received a command from God and came into the parts of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. Then our Saviour also came from Galilee to the Jordan, and sought and received baptism – though He was the Master and John was but a servant. Whereupon, there came to pass those marvelous deeds, great and beyond nature: the Heavens were opened, the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him that was being baptized, and the voice was heard from the Heavens bearing witness that this was the beloved Son of God, now baptized as a man (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22). From these events the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the great mystery of the Trinity were demonstrated. It is also from this that the present feast is called "Theophany," that is, the divine manifestation, God's appearance among men. On this venerable day the sacred mystery of Christian baptism was inaugurated; henceforth also began the saving preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

*Kontakion of Holy Theophany.
Fourth Tone*

On this day Thou hast appeared * unto the whole world, * and Thy light, O Sovereign Lord, * is signed on us who sing Thy praise * and chant with knowledge: Thou hast now come, * Thou hast appeared, O Thou Light unapproachable.

(From *The Great Horologion*, Holy Transfiguration Monastery,
Brookline, MA, 1997)



The Holy Trinity

“All power is given unto Me in Heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of time. Amen.” (Matt. 28:19-20)

NUMEROUS cults, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Oneness Sabellians, misrepresent the historical doctrine of the Holy Trinity by the doctrine was formulated at the First Ecumenical Council (Nicea, A.D. 325), thereby implying that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was *not* believed by the early Church. This is a gross historical error. Though we can say in one sense that the full formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was written down in credal form at Nicea and further clarified by the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, A.D. 381), it would be a total distortion of history to say that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was not believed until Nicea.

So one may ask, “Why did the doctrine of the Holy Trinity need to be explained?” As the first and second century came and went, the revealed biblical doctrine on God came under attack. Most of the time this attack was against the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. *This* was the reason for the Council at Nicea. The Arians, who got their name from the main proponent of their doctrine, a man called Arius, were teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ was *not* God Himself, but a created lesser god not equal with the Father. Nicea was not dealing with the Sabellian heresy *per se*. Nicea was not called to *create* the doctrine

(Adapted from *Christian News*, July 31, 2000)

of the Holy Trinity, but to confirm that the Holy Scriptures taught that Jesus Christ was truly God, a doctrine in which the Sabellians were in agreement with the Orthodox party. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea was Christological, not Trinitarian.

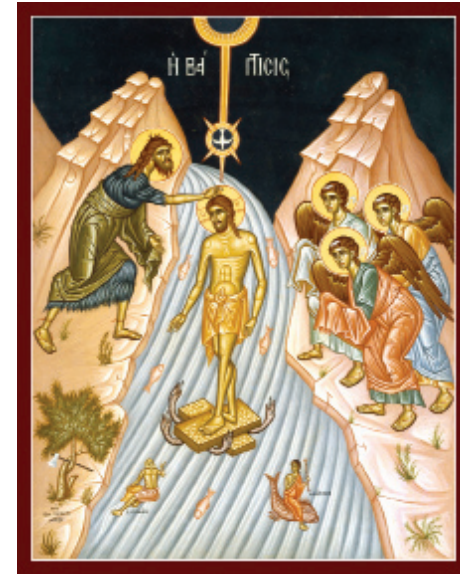
We believe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity because Holy Scripture teaches that there is but one God, and yet there is a Person called the Father, Who is referred to in personal pronouns, and is accredited with personal and divine attributes; there is a Person called the Son, Who is referred to with personal pronouns, and converses with the Person of the Father, and has divine attributes; and there is a Person called the Holy Spirit, Who is referred to with personal pronouns, and has personal and divine attributes, and yet the Holy Scriptures say that there is only one God.

What follows is a small sampling of the understanding of the revealed God, as understood by the early Church up through the time of the First Ecumenical Council.

The *Didache*, which appears to have been a teaching manual for new converts, and is dated between A.D. 60 to A.D. 80 (the latest date suggested is A.D. 150) states, "But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water.... But if thou hast neither, then pour on the head thrice in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (J. B. Lightfoot, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, Eerdmans, 1976, p. 126.)

St. Ignatius, writing around A.D. 110-120, in responding against those who denied the eternal nature of the Person of the Son, wrote, "We have also as a physician the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son and Word, *before time began*, but Who afterwards became also man, of Mary the Virgin." (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans, 1975, vol. 1, p. 52.)

Another of the defenders of Orthodoxy, **St. Justin Martyr**, who lived between A.D. 114-168, wrote, "For, in the Name of God, the Father and



The Second Feast Day of the Holy Trinity – Holy Theophany –

(January 6th)

*Dismissal Hymn of Holy Theophany.
First Tone*

When Thou wast baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest; for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son. And the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ our God, Who hast appeared and hast enlightened the world, glory be to Thee.

to them whom they judged were worthy to minister, as Saint Clement writes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 42).

*Kontakion of Holy Pentecost.
Plagal of Fourth Tone*

Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit.



Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they receive that washing with water.” (*First Apology*, LXI. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 183.)

Theophilus, a Greek pagan who was converted to Christianity, was the first to use the word Trinity in writing A.D. 170 to describe the relationship among the Persons of the Godhead. (E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons*, Tyndale House, 1984, p. 90.)

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who lived between A.D. 130-200 and was a disciple of Saint Polycarp, who was in turn a disciple of the Holy Apostle John, wrote against the Gnostics and stated, “Know thou that every man is either empty or full. For if he has not the Holy Spirit, he has no knowledge of the Creator, he has not received Jesus Christ the life; he knows not the Father Who is in Heaven...” (*Against Heresies* 3:16).

Athenagoras, writing between A.D. 170-180 in response to the Hellenistic thinking that it was absurd for God to have had a Son, stated, “Nor let any one think it ridiculous that God should have a Son. For though the poets [he is referring here to the poetic Greek philosophers], in their fictions, represent the gods as no better than men, our mode of thinking is not the same as theirs, concerning either God the Father or the Son” (Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 133). It must be noted that in the construction of this statement, “... either God the Father or the Son” that the word “God” proceeded by the word “either” demands that “God” is placed before both “Father” and “Son” so that it is understood, “either God the Father or [God] the Son.”

Athenagoras does not stop with his understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and Christology, but also has a well developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit when he wrote, “The Holy Spirit Himself also, Who operates in the prophets, we assert to be an effluence of God, flowing from Him, and returning back like a beam of the sun. Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declared both their powers in union and their distinction in order...” (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 133).

St. Hippolytus, in his work *Against the Heresy of Noetus*, who was the forerunner of Sabellius, wrote, “If, then, the Word was with God and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods but of one; of two Persons, however, and of a third economy, viz., the grace of the Holy Spirit. For the Father indeed is One, but there is [another] Person because there is also the Son; and there is a third, the Holy Spirit... The economy of the harmony is led back to one God; for God is One. It is the Father Who commands, and the Son Who obeys, and the Holy Spirit Who gives understanding; the Father is above all, and the Son Who is through all, and the Holy Spirit Who is in all” (*Against the Heresy of Noetus*, chapter 14). St. Hippolytus was born in A.D. 170 and died in A.D. 236. The commentary above was on John 1:1.

Tertullian, writing between A.D. 190 and at the latest A.D. 240, though most scholars say no later than A.D. 220, was the first of the Latin writers to use the word Trinity. He wrote, “The Word, therefore, is both always in the Father, as He says, ‘I am in the Father,’ and is always with God, according to what is written, ‘And the Word was with God;’ and never separate from the Father, since ‘I and my Father, [We] are one’ (*Against Praxeus*, chapter 8). Note: John 10:30, which states, “I and my Father are one.

Novatian, writing no later than A.D. 250, stated, “He [Jesus] never either compared or opposed Himself to the Father. He remembered throughout His earthly ministry that He was from the Father” (*Ancient Christian Commentary*, InterVarsity Press, 1999, vol. III, p.241). The Greek word for “from” is *ek*, meaning an extension of one from another. Jesus was the One from or out of another. As in Matt. 2:15, “Out of Egypt I called my Son” or it can be understood “from Egypt I called my Son.

St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Neocaesaria, A.D. 270, wrote”... God is a perfect Trinity, not divided nor differing in glory, eternity and sovereignty. Neither, indeed, is there any thing created or subservient in the Trinity, nor introduced, as though not there before but coming

moon”; and a little further on, “The Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning” (II Cor.).

That which came to pass at Pentecost, then, was the ordination of the Apostles, the commencement of the apostolic preaching to the nations, and the inauguration of the priesthood of the new Israel. **Saint Cyril of Alexandria** says that “Our Lord Jesus Christ herein ordained the instructors and teachers of the world and the stewards of His divine Mysteries... showing together with the dignity of Apostleship, the incomparable glory of the authority given them... Revealing them to be splendid with the great dignity of the Apostleship and showing them forth as both stewards and priests of the divine altars... they became fit to initiate others through the enlightening guidance of the Holy Spirit” (PG 74, 708-712). **Saint Gregory Palamas** says, “Now, therefore... the Holy Spirit descended... showing the Disciples to be supernal luminaries... and the distributed grace of the Divine Spirit came through the ordination of the Apostles upon their successors” (*Homily 24*, 10). And **Saint Sophronius, Bishop of Jerusalem**, writes, “After the visitation of the Comforter, the Apostles became high priests” (PG 87, 398 IB). Therefore, together with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon them who were present in the upper chamber, which the Lord had foretold as recorded in the Acts, “ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5), the Apostles were also appointed and raised to the high priestly rank, according to **Saint John Chrysostom** (PG 60, 21). On this day commenced the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by which we become “partakers of the Divine Nature” (II Peter 1:4). For before Pentecost, it is said of the Apostles and disciples only that they abode in “prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14); it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit that they persevered in the “*breaking of bread*,”—that is, the communion of the Holy Mysteries—“and in prayer” (Acts 2:42).

The feast of holy Pentecost, therefore, determined the beginning of the priesthood of grace, not the beginning of the Church. Henceforth, the Apostles proclaimed the good tidings “in country and town,” preaching and baptizing and appointing shepherds, imparting the priesthood

Such, therefore, are the reasons for the feast of Holy Pentecost: the coming of the All-holy Spirit into the world, the completion of the Lord Jesus Christ's promise, and the fulfillment of the hope of the sacred disciples. On the great and saving day of Pentecost, the Apostles of the Saviour, who were unlearned fishermen, made wise now of a sudden by the Holy Spirit, clearly and with divine authority spoke the heavenly doctrines. They became heralds of the truth and teachers of the whole world. On this day they were ordained and began their apostleship, of which the salvation of those three thousand souls in one day was the marvelous first fruit.

Some erroneously hold that Pentecost is the "birthday of the Church." But this is not true, for the teaching of the holy Fathers is that the Church existed before all other things. In the second vision of *The Shepherd of Hermas* we read: "Now brethren, a revelation was made unto me in my sleep by a youth of exceeding fair form, who said to me, 'Whom thinkest thou the aged woman, from whom thou receivedst the book, to be?' I say, 'The Sibyl.' 'Thou art wrong,' saith he, 'she is not.' 'Who then is she?' I say, 'The Church,' saith he. I said unto him, 'Wherefore then is she aged?' 'Because,' saith he, 'she was created before all things; therefore is she aged, and for her sake the world was framed.'" **Saint Gregory the Theologian** also speaks of "the Church of Christ... both before Christ and after Christ" (PG 35:1108-9). **Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus** writes, "The Catholic Church, which exists from the ages, is revealed most clearly in the incarnate advent of Christ" (PG 42:640). **Saint John Damascene** observes, "The Holy Catholic Church of God, therefore, is the assembly of the holy Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs who have been from the very beginning, to whom were added all the nations who believed with one accord" (PG 96, 1357c). According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, "The Prophets established the Church, the Apostles conjoined it, and the Evangelists set it in order" (PG 35, 589A). The Church existed from the creation of the Angels, for the Angels came into existence before the creation of the world, and they have always been members of the Church. **Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome**, says in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the Church "was created before the sun and

afterwards; nor, indeed, has the Son ever been without the Father, nor the Spirit without the Son, but the Trinity is ever the same, unvarying and unchangeable" (Beisner, *God in Three Persons*, p. 81).

We could continue to cite quotes from the first three centuries of the Church, but the point has been demonstrated. Enemies of the teaching concerning the Holy Trinity, who either out of ignorance or deceit, maintain that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was *not* taught by the early Church, have clearly been refuted. Please note that the last quote from St. Gregory the Wonderworker was sixty-six years before the First Ecumenical Council, and that the first quote from the *Didache*, which gave the Trinitarian formula for baptism, was 265 years before that Council, and was possibly written before the Holy Apostles John, Peter and Paul were martyred!

The Hebrew Bible uses the term Elohim to signify God; yet this word is plural (literally, "Gods"). Despite this, Elohim is always used with a verb in the singular form! For example, in Deut. 6:4: "The Lord our Gods (Elohim) is one Lord." The Triune God!





The Feast Day – Holy Pentecost

*Dismissal Hymn of Holy Pentecost.
Plagal of Fourth Tone*

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them didst draw the world into Thy net. O Befriender of man, glory be to Thee.

After the Saviour's Ascension into the Heavens, the eleven Apostles and the rest of His disciples, the God-loving women who followed after Him from the beginning, His Mother, the most holy Virgin Mary, and His brethren—all together about 120 souls—returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Entering into the house where they gathered, they went into the upper room, and there they persevered in prayer and supplication, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, as their Divine Teacher had promised them. In the meanwhile, they chose Matthias, who was elected to take the place of Judas among the Apostles.

Thus, on this day, Holy Pentecost, the seventh Sunday of the Paschal season, the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth day after Pascha, at the third hour of the day from the rising of the sun, there suddenly came a sound from Heaven, as when a mighty wind blows, and it filled the whole house where the Apostles and the rest were gathered. Immediately after the sound, there appeared tongues of fire that divided and rested upon the head of each one. Filled with the Spirit, all those present began speaking not in their native tongue, but in other tongues and dialects, as the Holy Spirit instructed them.

The multitudes that had come together from various places for the feast, most of whom were Jews by race and religion, were called Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and so forth, according to the places where they dwelt. Though they spoke many different tongues, they were present in Jerusalem by divine dispensation. When they heard that sound that came down from Heaven to the place where the disciples of Christ were gathered, all ran together to learn what had taken place. But they were confounded when they came and heard the Apostles speaking in many tongues. Marveling at this, they said one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" But others, because of their foolishness and excess of evil, mocked the wonder and said that the Apostles were drunken.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, and raising his voice, spoke to all the people, proving that that which had taken place was not drunkenness, but the fulfillment of God's promise that had been spoken by the **Prophet Joel**: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I shall pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28), and he preached Jesus of Nazareth unto them, proving in many ways that He is Christ the Lord, Whom the Jews crucified but God raised from the dead. On hearing Peter's teaching, many were smitten with compunction and received the word. Thus, they were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added to the Faith of Christ.