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Putting the pieces of our faith together

St. Mary Faith Enrichment Evenings
November 11-14, 2007

The Four Basic Questions



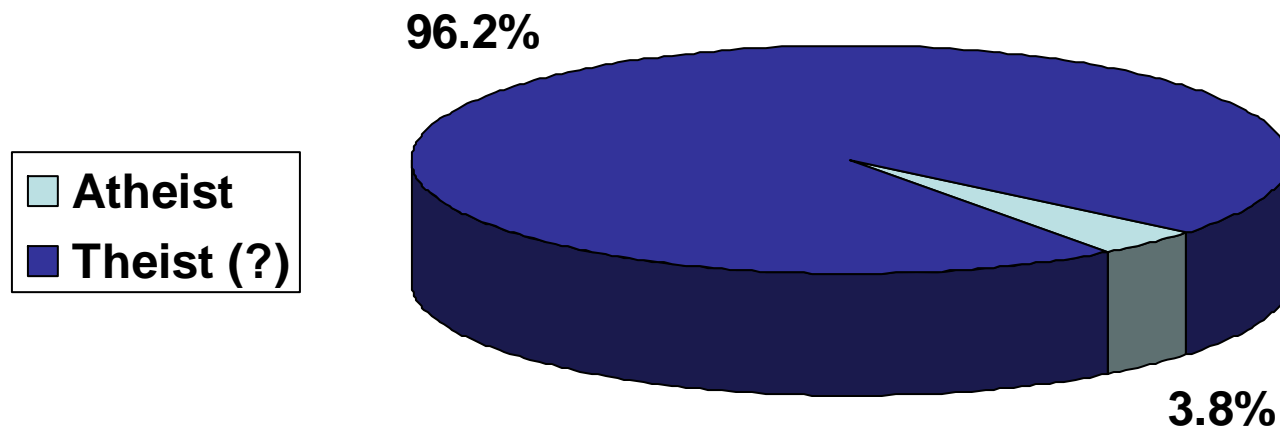
- Who is God?
- If God is good, why is there evil in the world?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world, what has God done about it?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world and God is doing something about it, how do we get with the program?



Basic Question #1: Who is God?

Sunday evening

Our Thirst for God



An amazing statistic:

- According to a 1995 survey by Encyclopaedia Britannica, only 3.8% of the world claims to be atheist
- i.e. 96.2% of people are at least open to the possibility of God and the supernatural

Our Questing Hearts



“Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men:

- What is man?
- What is the meaning, the aim of our life?
- What is moral good, what is sin?
- Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve?
- Which is the road to true happiness?
- What are death, judgment and retribution after death?
- What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?”

Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 1

At the Heart of the Quest



“From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives **with a profound religious sense.**”

Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2

We know God through the beauty of creation



“Question the beauty of the earth,
question the beauty of the sea,
question the beauty of the air
distending and diffusing itself...
question all these realities.
All respond: **See, we are beautiful.**
Their beauty is a profession.

These beauties are subject to change.

Who made them if not the Beautiful One
who is not subject to change?”

- St. Augustine

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his
handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the
earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

- Psalm 19: 1-4

We know God through the truth of conscience



“In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.”

- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 16

We know God in the goodness of life



“God created man for incorruption,
and made him in the image of his own eternity.”

- Wisdom 2:23

“It is in the face of death that the riddle of human existence grows most acute. Not only is man tormented by pain and by the advancing deterioration of his body, but even more so by a dread of perpetual extinction. He rightly follows the intuition of his heart when he abhors and repudiates the utter ruin and total disappearance of his own person. He rebels against death because he bears in himself an eternal seed which cannot be reduced to sheer matter.”

- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 18

The universal truths about God



“The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself.”

Vatican I, Dei Filius, chapter 1

What Christianity brings as a special revelation about God



Christianity professes two special truths about God:

“God is love.” (1 John 4: 8b)

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28: 19b)



Why is the Trinity important?

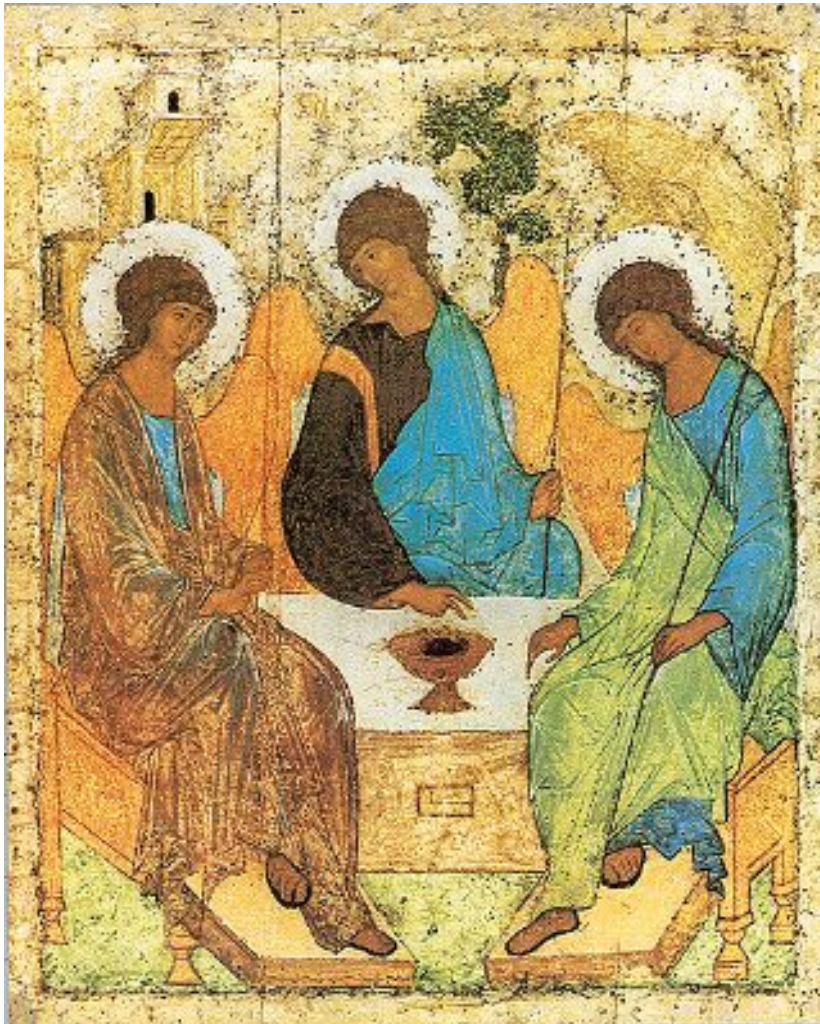
The analogy of the music player

Love is God's nature



- Not just that love is “in” God’s nature...
- Not just that God is loving...
- God’s very substance is Love!
- The Trinity is not just a communion of Persons, but of loving Persons
- It is love that binds the Trinity into a perfect Unity, while the nature of God as love flows naturally into a Trinity

What this means for us



“And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, ‘My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.’”

- Genesis 18: 1-3

The meaning of life



Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So **God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** And God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.**" And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

- Genesis 1: 26-31a

The destiny of Creation



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." ...And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it."

- Revelation 21: 1-6a; 22-24

Our deepest spiritual aspirations



- Truth
- Goodness
- Beauty

- ...Golf?





Next evening:
**If God is good, why is there
evil in the world?**