



Putting the pieces of our faith together

Holy Name of Jesus Parish Mission
March 2-4, 2008

The Four Basic Questions



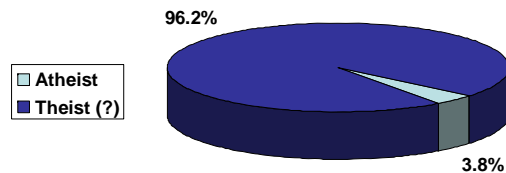
- Who is God?
- If God is good, why is there evil in the world?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world, what has God done about it?
- If God is good and there is evil in the world and God is doing something about it, how do we get with the program?



Basic Question #1:

Who is God?

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

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
The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19: 1)
- through the truth of conscience
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)
- through the goodness of life
“God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity.” (Wisdom 2:23)

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?

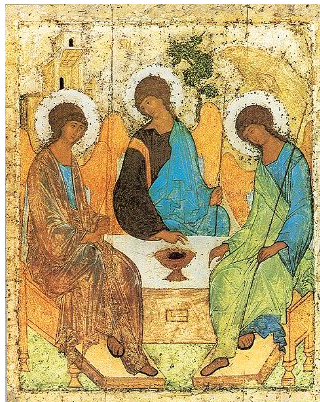
The analogy of the music player

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



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 saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

- Genesis 1: 27-28, 31a



Basic Question #2:

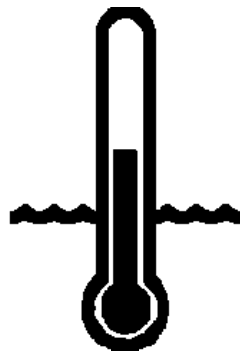
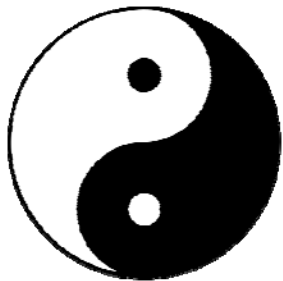
If God is good, why is there evil in the world?

The short answer...



SIN

What is evil?



Where does evil come from?



Examples of physical evil

The finitude of creation



Moral evil



311 Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has *moral evil*, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 311

Sin of angels



Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

- Revelation 12: 7-9

Sin of angels



We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Ephesians 6: 12

Original sin



The analogy of the power cords

What if our first parents had never sinned?



- Every human being would have been immaculately conceived
- All persons would have received a special protection against attacks of the Evil One
- Direct conversation with the Holy Spirit, as well as the angels and saints
- Human beings would have been "high priests" of creation with a power of initiative within nature
- All would have been preserved from death (assumption, transfiguration, or dormition)

Immediate consequences of original sin



399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.

Immediate consequences of original sin



400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay". Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground", for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history.*

Why doesn't God just wipe out evil?



Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?'

Why doesn't God just wipe out evil?



He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

- Matthew 13: 24-30

What's taking God so long?



Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

What's taking God so long?



Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- 2 Peter 3: 8-13

So what shall we do?



REPENT!

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

- Mark 1: 14



Next evening:
**If God is good, and there is evil
in the world, what has God
done about it?**