

God, are you really out there?

“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.” – Nicene Creed, 381 AD

At Mass we profess our faith with the Nicene Creed which begins with the line above. One short sentence states very quickly and clearly five basic tenets of our faith.

1) We believe. 2) God is one. 3) God is Father. 4) God is Almighty. 5) God is creator of everything that exists. The End.

Well, not really. This is more like the beginning. I was privileged recently to teach a class called “The Existence of God” which I have sat in on many times, but don’t recall ever teaching. I have to say that the more I thought about teaching that topic, the more nervous I became. God is a difficult topic to approach; because God is impossible to understand with the human mind, and among human minds mine is pretty average. Facing a challenge like that requires a bit of meditation, a bible and a catechism. I couldn’t do it otherwise. The great thing is that in this one sentence all of Christendom, Judaism and Islam can find agreement and this is a great place to begin a discussion. At the same time, this sentence doesn’t begin to touch the mysteries that encompass God the Father.

Consider some of His attributes; God is one, there is no division within the Godhead, but Muslims and Jews disagree with this Christian truth. God has revealed to His people that He is three individual persons who cannot be separated from one another. As Father, he is creator, law-giver and protector of His people. He is uncreated; He has no beginning. He is the first cause of all creation and has no creator. There is no God equal to or greater than our God. He is Almighty; He has and is the source of unlimited power. He is eternal and will have no end. He is unchanging and is as He always has been, which is the one constant in the entire universe. He is truth, goodness, beauty and love. So He doesn’t just portray or project truth or goodness, He IS truth and goodness. We give love, we seek love and we receive love but that’s just about the best we can do. God is the source of all love because He is love.

In discussions I have had with non-Catholic Christians, I have gathered that they aren’t taught and don’t understand that as creator, God isn’t subject to the laws of His own creation. Let’s use time, as an example. Because God created time, He isn’t subject to it or its effects. He doesn’t grow old and He can see us and our unborn great, great grand- children with the same clarity as Christopher Columbus or Julius Caesar. That may be a small point, but it prevents them from understanding Catholic practices like having Masses said for the dead or any prayer to or for the deceased. For my Protestant friends, once a person is dead they are forgotten and they have no further knowledge of those on earth. As Catholics, we can ask God to be merciful to someone who died 10 years ago or we can ask a deceased family member or saint to intercede on our behalf.

When mankind wants to solve a problem, we throw money at research until we develop a new drug or invent a better mousetrap; and we admire our prowess. Not so in the pursuit of God. We don’t search and find God; God reveals Himself to us. God’s revelation is gradual and very subtle. It’s usually in ways that you really have to discern, “Is this what I think it is?” For example, our God is a God of great order and organization. Consider the passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans 1: 19-25:

“For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened. While claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image of mortal man or of birds or of four-legged animals or of snakes. Therefore, God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

We sometimes miss simple clues like the sun faithfully rising in the east and setting in the west or the length of days according to the season, yet these too are signs of God's power and glory. You can also consider the opening passage from Psalm 19: 2-5:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft. One day to the next conveys that message; one night to the next imparts that knowledge. There is no word or sound; no voice is heard; Yet their report goes forth through all the earth, their message, to the ends of the world."

While the passage from Romans may seem a little rough, it reveals something about the love and power of God and the fact that the God of the Old Testament is that same one in the New Testament. He doesn't want to lose a single one of us to darkness, but if we turn away He will allow it. He doesn't force us to return his love; we can worship money, tattoos, pornography or whatever we want. In the larger context, this passage is very frank about turning away from our creator and offers an incentive to avoid foolish and unprofitable behavior.

In every culture and at every period in history mankind has always searched for God and, misunderstanding what he sees, has given power and names to gods that don't exist. This desire for God is a good thing, but sometimes it has a bad ending. We all have an internal desire to know and experience God, but we can be misled in the things we seek. Here's why: we are created in the image and likeness of God; our only fulfillment is God. Mankind finds pleasure and some happiness in something and confuses it for fulfillment. Mankind seeks fulfillment in their quest for material wealth, drugs, pornography and the sins surrounding human beauty, gambling and countless other substitutes. But they are only substitutes; none can give fulfillment.

Our God was smart to separate pleasure, which can lead to covetousness, from fulfillment by placing the cross of suffering in between the two.

Consider these Words of Jesus from the Gospel of St. Matthew 7: 13-14:

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction; and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few."

He has allowed us to make the choice to be with him and to demonstrate that choice by choosing suffering instead of pleasure. This way, instead of getting stuck in empty pleasure, we get to experience eternal joy. I can hardly wait; and I hope we can all be friends in heaven.

Teaching a class about God was in fact a very enriching experience.

Ed Ibarra
Lecturer



May business meeting is on Thursday May 5th at 7:00pm. Mass for the deceased Knights of this council is on Friday, May 13th at 5:45pm followed by adoration and confession. Let's all make a good confession this month and pray that God give us the grace to seek Him in the silence and to do His will in May and throughout the year. Pray for the intentions of the Pope. Pray that Catholics be drawn to the Cross and conversion of heart.