

Many people believe in God. But, the Christian alone believes that God is three Persons yet one God. There have been many attempts by theologians over the centuries to try to explain the Trinity, some of which are more complicated than the Trinity itself!

Have you ever wondered what does God do with eternity? The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit just hanging out together? It is a pretty big deal keeping this universe going. Maybe that is the answer? But no, it is a finite universe – child’s play and thus however awesome, could never be the whole life-work of an infinite Being.

We could ask, “What was God doing before creation?” Nothing, He didn’t have time. Ha. Some might think God was lonely and needed us for company. What does God love with His infinite loving-power? We might all say, “Us!” True, but God made the universe out of nothing, but didn’t need it or us to be fulfilled.

God knows infinitely and loves infinitely. Finites like us don’t quite fit the bill for infinite love, because being finite creatures we can’t quite grasp or fully return that kind of love.

*It is similar to why the animals would not do for Adam, either. They were a bit too finite to share the fullness of his love. Imagine if the only love you had to give was to your pet? Hopefully you might understand how it would be with us and God for God’s fulfillment.

The answer of what God does with eternity is discovered in the Trinity, revealed to us by Jesus. We have human nature and God has divine nature. Our human nature determines what we can and cannot do. If I try to jump off a building and fly like a bird, well we know that isn’t going to end well as it is not in my human nature to do so, to fly like a bird.

Compare this with the Divine nature of God, which cannot be confined: “Who is God?” Answer: The Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. “What is God?” God is one divine nature. Because each possesses the divine nature, each can do all that goes with being God. Because each is God, there is no inequality – nor do they divvy up, for it is possessed only in its totality as One. There are no limits or divisions of love.

If God’s love could only be offered to us, it would be hard to believe that God is love, for we are limited in our loving.

**In the Son, the Father and Holy Spirit, infinite love is infinitely accepted and infinitely returned in one divine community, which in turn, reaches out to us and the universe through the centuries beyond us. That is how God is love. God’s love is eternal and has no end or beginning, reaching eternally through time.

That is how we are made in God’s image: in our loving and receiving love. God is communion and the basis of that relationship is love. And that is the very image in which we are made. We are most God-like when we are in intimate relations, when we are Church, in communion, loving one another.

+Msgr. Kelly was the vocation director when I applied to the priesthood and once accepted, he said to me, “Patrick, you have had a great “one on one” relationship with God, but now we shall see how you do when you walk with His Church.” What a walk it has been!

*I grew up in Amherst VA and was baptized at Holy Cross Church. Who would have thought that 52 years later I would arise from that font and one day be ordained a priest?

I had a great foundation from the Sisters of Charity and of course, my family and in particular two great models of faith – my mother and father – who modeled that our faith should be treasured above all things.

*After six years of seminary in Baltimore, MD I would be assigned to St. Bede in Williamsburg with my pastor, Msgr. Carr. A number of years earlier, I had spent a summer in a chaplaincy program at MCV hospital. Being shy, this greatly helped in my formation.

Trying to make conversation with a patient I was visiting it got around as to what he did for a living. He was a priest named Bill Carr – gulp. Who would have thought years later I would be his associate?

+In Williamsburg I heard my first confession and I was not ready for it. It was the very first week of my priesthood - I was walking across the parking lot and a man stopped me saying, “Father, would you hear my confession?”

Offering wonderful counsel, he said, “Father, am I ever going to get absolution?” I began with the absolution formula, but degenerated into something else, with pieces of the Hail Mary and other prayers that came to mind. I got the valid part: “I absolve you...”

*2 years later I would become the campus minister at William and Mary. They were the ones who dragged me to Haiti, where I experienced the poorest of the poor. I loved being with the students, but must missed the parish life, in which all were not the same age.

*I became a pastor for the first time of two parishes in Suffolk and Smithfield. They could not have been more supportive and loving in the face of my total lack of experience.

*From there, I was named pastor of St. Jude Parish in Radford VA. Who would have thought after 20 years from graduating at Radford University that I would return as a priest?

A couple of parishioners there in the parish were also my former professors. They ran into my Spanish teacher and asked if she remembered me? She replied, “No, I only remember the really dumb ones and really smart ones.”

+While there, for a short time, I assisted with the campus ministry at VA Tech as the priest there had taken leave. There I experienced the tragic shootings and the great sadness that

overwhelmed all us. I was even asked to hold a funeral for one of the professors who had died in the shootings.

I would spend five years as pastor of St. Jude. While there, I was also involved in a terrible car accident on I 81 that came close to taking my life. I was returning from a meeting in Richmond when this occurred. I was anointed by Msgr. Tom Miller who had once been rector here. Who would have thought? In the hospital I learned how humiliating/humbling it can be to be a patient who could not take care of himself. I carry that experience every time I visit someone in the hospital.

I finished my time there with an invitation to become rector of the Cathedral. I was stunned and humbled. Who would have thought after prostrating on that floor for my ordination that I would one day return to become rector and later Monsignor?

I love you and thank you for helping me become a better priest and to experience the love of the Trinity, in my communion with you in so many ways. Almost eight years later, here I am. In the eight years, I have baptized those I now give first communion, and those I gave first communion now receive confirmation. How blessed I am!

Looking back for those twenty years in my priesthood brings me to something Pope Benedict said of a young priest who had pressed more the truth than love and it had made the news. They asked, "Would you have done the same thing?" He replied, "Perhaps when I was a younger priest." So very true.