

**T E A C H I N G   T H E   A L L  
H O L Y   T R I N I T Y**

*A Theological Teaching Guide for Educators*

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

## FOCUS ON WHAT GOD REVEALS, NOT WHAT WE IMAGINE

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In the Orthodox tradition, we begin with reverence and humility before the mystery of God. The Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is not a human concept we try to fit into our understanding, but the divine reality revealed by God Himself.

*“No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One.”*

— **St. Gregory the Theologian (Gregory of Nazianzus), Oration 40**

We do not understand or explain the Trinity by analogies but by divine revelation.

## THREE IN ONE AND ONE IN THREE

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God is One in essence (*ousia* — բնութիւն) and Three in Person (*hypostasis* — սնձն). This is not a mathematical puzzle, but a revealed mystery. The Three Persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — are co-eternal, consubstantial, and undivided.

*“The Father is the source, the Son is the Only-Begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is revealed to us through the Son, bringing holiness and perfection.”*

— **St. Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit**

We uphold both truths at once: unity of essence and distinction of persons.

## TEACHING LANGUAGE AND GUIDELINES

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### **The Trinity Is Not Like...**

Avoid analogies such as water, eggs, or clovers. These distort the truth and lead to heresies such as *Modalism* or *Tritheism*. As the Armenian Church teaches, the Holy Trinity is not an image of creation, but of divine self-revelation. Instead, emphasize reverence and awe.

### **Created, Begotten, Proceeding**

We confess that the Son is begotten of the Father before all ages, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Armenian Church fully affirms this doctrine, consistent with the original Nicene-Constantinopolitan faith. The procession is not like creation or birth in human terms — it is a divine mystery.

**We do not say**, as the Western Church added to the Nicene Creed: *"the Holy Spirit... who proceeds from the Father and the Son."*

The Filioque was introduced gradually in the Western Church from the sixth century onward and formally added to the Creed by Rome. The Armenian Church, together with all Oriental and Eastern Orthodox churches, rejects this addition as both unscriptural and a unilateral violation of the conciliar process.

### **Persons, Not Individuals or Parts**

The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are not parts of a whole or individuals in a group. The term "person" (hypostasis) is used to denote real distinction without division. They are not three gods but one God in three Persons, perfectly united. The Son is not the Father, the Spirit is not the Son — but all are fully and perfectly God.

### **Distinct, Not Separate**

Each Person of the Holy Trinity is distinct but not separate. The Cappadocian Fathers help us understand this distinction without division.

*"We contemplate the indivisible distinction of the Persons and the unity of nature with the eyes of faith."*

— **St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Holy Trinity**

### **Is, Not Includes**

We do not say God *includes* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — as if God is greater than the Three. We say: God **is** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is the name into which we are baptized (Matthew 28:19), and this is the God we worship.

### **The Works of God**

The Father creates, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies — not as separate roles, but as actions of the one God in Holy Trinity. The Son becomes incarnate for our salvation; the Spirit sanctifies us and leads us into all truth. All actions of God are accomplished through the perfect unity of the Three Persons.

*“As for us, we will glorify Him who was before the ages, worshipping the all-Holy Trinity and the One Godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”*

— **Armenian Divine Liturgy**

### **The Holy Spirit Is Not a Dove**

In Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit descends *“in bodily form like a dove”* (Luke 3:22) — meaning the dove was a visible sign, not that He became a dove. We must not confuse the symbol with the reality. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, not an animal or force. Likewise, Jesus Christ is not merely wearing human form — He is truly God and truly human, one Person whose divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

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To speak of the Holy Trinity is to speak with reverence, love, and obedience. The Father is the Source, the Son is the Word made flesh, and the Spirit is the Giver of Life.

*“We do not change the everlasting boundaries set by our Fathers, but we keep the tradition, just as we received it.”*

— **St. John of Damascus, On the Orthodox Faith**

The Holy Trinity is not to be dissected but worshiped. Through the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the Son, and through the Son, we are adopted by the Father.

***Glory be to the all-Holy Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.***