

Dr. Papanikolaou- Lesson 13

Big Question: How do we draw closer to God?

Key Points

Teachers should understand these few, “key points” before the lesson, and students should take these points away from the classroom.

- A. The doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian response to how it is that God is God while still being in relationship to what is not God.
- B. The Church, throughout its history, has brought together teachers of the Church to help make sense of debates and discussions concerning God. These were called Ecumenical Councils, and the church had 7 of them. The Creed came out of an Ecumenical Council. They determined that the Jesus Christ is both fully man and fully God—the second Person of the Trinity. But what does that mean?
- C. If you want intimacy with another human being, then you need to speak words, certain kinds of words, words that honestly reveal things about yourself.
- D. Jesus is like a personal revelation that was spoken by God to us. God is waiting on our response to his intimate Word.
- E. You have the freedom to respond in any way that you would like, and the way that you respond will affect the intimacy of your relationship.

Review

Ask students:

1. What did we learn last class? Review your notes and rewrite a key point or takeaway that you found significant. If you were absent, your job is to review the student guide from last class and then ask your fellow students questions about the points they're about to share.

Give them 3 or so minutes to review and write, then ask them:

- Share what you've written (go around the room systematically to get feedback)
- Then ask students who were absent last class: do you have any questions they have about their points? Students may not be able to answer their questions, and that's okay. You can affirm the question, and if it's easy to answer yourself, do so. And if not, say “We'll hold on to that question to see if it's answered in any of the future classes.”

Finally, review any key points from last class that were missed, especially if they are really important for this upcoming lesson.

Opening Reflection

Say something like:

- Last week we discussed the purpose of beauty in Orthodox worship, how God speaks to us through the beauty of things that He created.
- Today, we're going to learn a little bit more about how God speaks to us through the Trinity, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ.

2. Read the following passage. Why does the scripture say that the Word WAS God and yet also that He was WITH God? Does this make sense? What is the purpose of this seeming contradiction?

(Each member of the Holy Trinity is fully God, and yet each member is also coexisting WITH the other two Godly persons of the Trinity!)

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

3. Who or what is the Word?

(Christ took flesh and became the “light of all mankind.”)

Preparation for Video Clip

- The beginning of the Gospel of John is a bit confusing, so see if Dr. Papanikolaou can shed some light on the significance of one of Christ’s names, ‘Word.’
 - In the course of today’s lesson, we’re going to be answering the big question, ‘How can I draw closer to God?’”
4. Take notes on the points Dr. Papanikolaou makes in his video clip
 - a. The doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian response to ...
 - b. Dr. Papanikolaou describes an interaction between two people that causes intimacy. What is it?
(When one person reveals a personal detail about his life and makes himself vulnerable.)
 - c. Jesus Christ is like a _____ personal revelation _____ that was spoken by God to us.
 - d. God is waiting for our _____ response _____, and the way that we do will determine _____ the intimacy of our relationship _____.

Reflection on Video Clip

5. Do I have the kind of relationship that Dr. Papanikolaou described with anyone in my life?
6. Do I have that kind of relationship with God?
7. Why do I, or don’t I, have relationships like this? Would they be helpful for my life?
8. How could I safely go about achieving deeper relationships with people who are worthy of trust? How could I achieve a deeper relationship with God?
9. Any final thoughts?

Close with any of the key points that they might not have addressed in their own sharing/discussion.

At this point, you may choose to hand out the “Key Points” summary page for this lesson.