

- 76 In the Old Testament, God reveals himself through various images and events that witness to his presence: in the three travellers whom Abraham received; in the vision of the ladder joining heaven and earth in the dream of the patriarch Jacob; before Moses in the burning bush that was not consumed; in the pillars of fire and cloud (see *Ex* 13:21); over the Ark of the Covenant (see *Ex* 25:22); and as a quiet and gentle breeze (see *1 Kgs* 19:12).
- 77 The Chosen People of God profess their God, exalting him with various names: Saviour (*2 Sm* 22:2-3; *Ps* 106[107]:21; *Is* 43:3-4; *Is* 45:15); Creator (*Job* 4:17; *Job* 32:22; *Ps* 95[96]:6; *Is* 17:7; *Is* 51:13); Lord (*Ex* 3:15); Father (*Ps* 89[90]:27; *Is* 9:5; *Is* 63:16; *Mal* 1:6); Bridegroom (*Hos* 2:22); and Shepherd (*Ps* 23[24]:1). However, the Old Testament titles were merely prefigurements of the Revelation of God as the Father of the only-begotten Son. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (*Jn* 1:18).
- 78 The Son of God, Jesus Christ, in whom along with a human nature "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (*Col* 2:9), reveals the Father: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (*Mt* 11:27). Jesus teaches us to address God as "Our Father" (*Mt* 6:9) and to imitate his perfection: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt* 5:48). In Jesus Christ, the invisible God becomes visible for people: "The Father and I are one" (*Jn* 10:30) and "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (*Jn* 14:9).

2. The Father without Beginning

- 79 The Church calls "Father" him who has no father, and was never anyone's son.⁵⁷ The evangelist John says that the Word was "in the beginning" (*Jn* 1:1) (in Slavonic, *v nachali*, "as the foundational principle"). The Holy Fathers understood this to affirm that "the beginning" is the Person of the Father.⁵⁸ He who is the personal Beginning of all is himself without a beginning that would cause him to be. In other words, the Father is the Beginning without beginning. This antinomy expresses the freedom of the divine Person of the Father, who is not caused by anything or anyone. "The Father is ... said to be both without origin, and origin himself—origin in that he is the cause and spring and eternal

⁵⁷ See ATHANASIUS THE GREAT, *First Letter to Serapion*, 16: PG 26, 568.

⁵⁸ GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, *Oration 42*, 15: PG 36, 475.

light."⁵⁹ As the Beginning of all creation, the Father fills all things, and at the same time surpasses all that is created.

- 80 In her experience, the Church always contemplates the Father in relation to the Son and the Holy Spirit, and this Trinity (Triad) as a communion of Persons.

I believe in one God, the Father glorified in the Trinity—unbegotten, beginningless and endless; in the Son—begotten, yet co-beginningless and co-endless with the Father; and in the Holy Spirit—who proceeds from the Father and is revealed in the Son, co-beginningless and equal to the Father and the Son. I believe in the Trinity, one in essence, yet multiple in Persons; Trinity according to names, yet one God.⁶⁰

- 81 The Father is the Father because he is the Father of the Son and the Source of the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Son and the Holy Spirit are "from the Father, although not *after* the Father."⁶¹ The generation of the Word and the procession of the Spirit are not to be taken according to categories of time: "For the Father eternally begets the Son, co-eternal and co-reigning; and the Holy Spirit is in the Father, glorified with the Son; one power, one nature, and one divinity."⁶² God the Father is the Beginning of the indivisible and most intimate communion (in Greek, *koinonia*) in love of the divine Persons.

- 82 The personal distinctiveness of the Father from the Son and the Holy Spirit lies in the fact that the *Father is unbegotten*. Himself unbegotten, he is the Beginning of the Person of the Son and of the Person of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God the Father is without beginning means that he is not conditioned by anyone or anything else.

The Father is called thus because he begets the Son; and the Son is called thus because he is begotten by the Father; and the Holy Spirit is called thus because of his procession from the Father, yet being inseparable from him.⁶³

- 83 In the Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, the Church calls the Father *incomprehensible* and *uncircumscribable*. The *incomprehensibility* of the Father indicates that no stage of our coming to know God is ever definitive. After all, only God can know God to his very

⁵⁹ GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, *Oration 20, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops*, 7: PG 35, 1073.

⁶⁰ ILARION, METROPOLITAN OF KYIV, *Confession of Faith*.

⁶¹ See GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, *Oration 29, The Third Theological Oration*, 3: PG 36, 77.

⁶² *Floral Triodion*, Pentecost, Vespers, Final Sticheron at Psalm 140.

⁶³ ILARION, METROPOLITAN OF KYIV, *Confession of Faith*.