

Chapter 4

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

After having considered the implications that arise from the word “I believe” when it is said in the context of living our faith and having studied in depth the meaning of the expression “*I believe in one God;*” let us now concern ourselves with the first article of faith just as it is stated in the symbol of the Apostles: “*I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth*”.

The faith of the ancient covenant proclaimed God as the father of Israel and of all the peoples, as creator and Lord of the world. In fact, as we have distinguished “with its first words the Christian creed takes up the creed of Israel and takes up with it Israel’s striving, its experience of faith, and its struggle for God”.¹

The revelation from God as the only God of the universe expresses itself in one emphatic way in the book of Deuteronomy: “that the Lord is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other”. (Dt 4:39)

The New Testament recognizes the God of Israel as Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who raised Him from among the dead and who conveyed on Him His Spirit. The revelation of God as Father indicates that we are in the presence of one person who is Life, and also loving relationship with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.

Now we ask ourselves: What is the meaning of this fatherhood of God for us? How is it reflected in the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate?

God is Father

The invocation of God as Father is known in many religions but Jesus has revealed that God is Father in a new sense. He is Father not only in being creator; he is eternally Father by His relationship to His only Son, who, reciprocally, is Son only in relation to His Father.²

By calling God “Father” the language of faith indicates that God is the origin of everything, and that He is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. His parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood³ that indicates the most affectionate union by natural forces of God’s intimacy between Creator and His creatures.⁴

¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 110

² CCC, 238 & 240

³ Cf. Is 66, 13; Ps 131, 2

⁴ Cf. CCC 239

The New Testament ordinarily speaks of God recognizing in Him the first Person of the Trinity, that is to say, the Father. We read for example “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 1:3, cf. 1Thes 1:1, 3). All the history of redemption is contained in the word ‘Father’. We are allowed to say ‘Father’ because the Son was our brother and has revealed the Father to us; because, thanks to what Christ has done, we have once more become children of God”.⁵

In the preaching of Jesus, the Father appears as the source of all good, as the measure of the upright man. The love of God for man reaches its summit when Jesus Christ with his arms open on the cross prays for his enemies. “Father, forgive them”. His prayer shows us the nature of the Father’s love expressed in the person of the Son.

In this respect it is interesting to observe that in the gospel of Saint John, the center is not the person of Jesus Christ but the Father. We can say that Christ yields His place to God the Father. The God of Israel continues to be the main character. Jesus never appears without some sort of relationship with His Father; His last revelation is that God, His Father, wants to be our Father (cf. Jn 20:17).⁶

God is Creator

God is our creator and therefore we belong to him. Everything proceeds from Him and because of that, human beings are good because they are “participation” in God. Psalm 33:15 says that God molds all hearts and understands their actions.

The idea that God has created each human being is part of the biblical image of man. Each man individually and by himself is loved by God. He knows each one of us. In this sense, in virtue of creation, the human being is already in a special way the “son” of God.

And since God is our creator, God is before all our Father. With the expression “I believe in God the Father, creator”, the Creed joins to the familiar term father another term of cosmic power, creator, in order to describe the only God. When we say that God is Father, not only are we not taking away anything of his mysterious transcendence, but it adds to the mystery of his personal being, full of internal fecundity.

We believe that God’s might is universal, because God has created everything, rules everything and can do everything; it is loving, because God is our Father; and it is mysterious because only faith can discern it when it “is made perfect in weakness”⁷.

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 136

⁶ Cf. X. Leon-Dufour, *Reading St. John’s Gospel (Lectura del Evangelio de San Juan)*, 24

⁷ CCC 268

Anyone who thus professes his faith, Benedict XVI says, makes a decision about values that is certainly comprehensible as truth, deep down it is opting for the truth. This must be regarded as a decision for the truth. The Christian statement “I believe in God” is always a process of separation, of acceptance, of purification, and of transformation⁸.

God is Father and Creator but for whoever wants to know Him, He always presents Himself beyond any effort of comprehension: “no one has ever seen God, the only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him (Jn 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim 6:16; 1 Jn 4:12). God is hidden in the cloud and from there he speaks to Jesus’ disciples; “This is my chosen Son; listen to him (Lk 9:35).

The Father in the symbol of the Cross

Now we move on to consider the “vision” of God the Father just as it is lived in the domain of the spiritual experience. The vision that Concepcion Cabrera had of the Cross of the Apostolate can be interpreted in reference to the manifestations of God (theophanies) in the Old Testament, which take place among clouds and light (Gn 15:17; 19: 16-18).

The people of God was guided in the desert by a column of clouds during the day and a column of fire at night (cf. Ex 13:22). “The symbol of clouds known in the Christian tradition received in the Bible a place of predilection. Associated to the symbol of fire, it indicates the double aspect of the mystery of God: his holiness is inaccessible and He brings Himself close to those he wants to save”⁹.

In the context of our reflection, the Father does not appear visibly in the emblem of the Cross of the Apostolate, like the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Father is invisible; he is concealed behind the radiant clouds and is expressed in an immense frame of light. The resplendent clouds and the dazzling white light reveal Him to us. It is a true proclamation of a mystery always new.

Light is the characteristic element that surrounds God. God is surrounded with light (Ex 24:17; Hab 3:4), He himself is light (Is 60:19-20, Wis 7:26); He is light and love (1 Jn 1:5; 4:8); He is “Father of lights” from whom proceeds every perfect gift (cf. Jm 1:17); he dwells in unapproachable light that radiates over all his creatures (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16), in such a way that those who “once were in darkness, now are light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8; cf. 1Thes 5:5).

This light that shines in the cosmos, where the Cross of the Apostolate floats, enables us to sense God as creator and father; this light radiates the immense love with which He has loved us; a love that is not, in any way, a response to our love for Him; His love is first and gratuitous; He loved us first, sinners that we were (cf. 1 Jn 4:10).

⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 151

⁹ E. Sadowska, *This beautiful Cross (Esta bella Cruz, not translated into English, 15)*

The supreme manifestation of His love is the gift he gave us in His Son, in order to communicate to us through Him “the life that only he is able to give us” (cf. Jn 20:31). We are children of God through the only begotten Son of God.

And so the exhortation of the apostle St. John to walk in the light of God, brings with it the result of “fellowship with one another” (1Jn. 1:7). God is light; therefore any form of darkness is incompatible with Him and with communion with Him.

Therefore, knowing the meaning that the expression “I believe in God the Father” entails, as a reference to the faith of Israel and as the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity of God – just as Benedict XVI presents it- with the conviction that true Christian apologetics, “the most convincing demonstration of its truth against everything that negates it, is, on the one hand the saints, and on the other hand, the beauty that faith has generated”¹⁰, let us conclude by including texts from Concepcion Cabrera de Armida about the mystery of God, these texts convey the live experience of someone who has an intimate relationship with the Lord.

The first text is an experience of the loving presence of God in her life:

Father! For me this heavenly Father has been everything. He created me. He gave me a Word made flesh, his divine Son in order to redeem me. He watches over my poor soul day and night. He has looked at me and with this divine look that cleanses where He touches, He has made me His, he has purified me so many times.

I have received from this Father, whom I adore and love with all the strength of my soul, innumerable graces. This heavenly Father gave me his Divine Word as a gift.

The spiritual experience of Concepcion Cabrera de Armida gives testimony of the love of God in the interior of His mysterious Trinity, but also of the love for man, an experience that helps us to discover the figure of the Father through the contemplation of the symbols in the Cross of the Apostolate.

When Jesus calls you “loving Father”, “Father of my soul”, he would take delight in singular pleasure, as if caressing with infinite tenderness so dear a name. You were his life, and I want you to be mine also. In You the Word made flesh was well pleased; You were his constant thought; his delight was to please you. He was always in ecstasy.

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *On the Way...*, 39

How many times when speaking the name Father, when speaking of His wonders and all His miracles, He would defer them to this loving Father in whom He lived absorbed!

In Concepcion's writings we appreciate how much the revelation of God as Father resounds in the mystical experience. Now we are able to go on to consider the second article of our faith that talks directly about the person of Jesus Christ in his relationship with God the Father and his relationship with man, his brothers; which we express in the statement: "I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord".