

**PUTTING TOGETHER THE  
PUZZLE OF FAITH:  
FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS**

**SESSION F1, 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM**

# WHY THIS TALK?

- KEY CONCEPT: META-NARRATIVE
- A META-NARRATIVE IS A VISION OF THINGS THAT EXPLAINS:
  - WHY THEY ARE THE WAY THEY ARE
  - HOW WE CAN BEST INTERACT WITH THEM
- EXAMPLES OF META-NARRATIVES: IDEOLOGIES, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, “THE DAVINCI CODE”
- THE GREATEST CONFRONTATIONS IN HISTORY HAVE INVOLVED META-NARRATIVES (BIRTH OF BUDDHISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM; THE REFORMATION; THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS)
- A KEY FEATURE OF POST-MODERNITY IS THE DECONSTRUCTION OF META-NARRATIVES, LEAVING US ADRIFT

# CHRISTIANITY AND META-NARRATIVES

- CHRISTIANITY NOT ONLY OFFERS A META-NARRATIVE, IT ALSO OFFERS CRITERIA TO EVALUATE ITS PARTS
  - WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY IDENTIFIES A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SACRED AND SECULAR SPHERES, THEREFORE ALLOWING A CERTAIN INDEPENDENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTS OF THE META-NARRATIVE (E.G. THE BIBLE DOES NOT CONTAIN DETAILED ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL THEORIES)

# META-NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

- FOR CHRISTIANITY, A VALID META-NARRATIVE:
  - CONSIDERS EVERYTHING WHICH EXISTS, BOTH THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL
  - IS UNIVERSAL (“CATHOLIC”) IN SCOPE
  - IS EXPLANATORY FOR ALL OF HISTORY
  - SEES ALL TRUTH AS ONE
  - OFFERS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION CONSISTENT WITH THE LAW OF LOVE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON AS CREATED IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

# THE FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS

- THE “FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS” APPROACH WAS DEVELOPED TO HELP COMMUNICATE THE CHRISTIAN META-NARRATIVE
- KEY PARTS OF THE FAITH JIGSAW PUZZLE:
  - WHO IS GOD?
  - IF GOD IS GOOD, WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD?
  - IF GOD IS GOOD AND THERE IS EVIL IN THE WORLD, WHAT HAS GOD DONE ABOUT IT?
  - IF GOD IS GOOD AND THERE IS EVIL IN THE WORLD AND GOD IS DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT, HOW DO WE GET ON BOARD?

# WHO IS GOD?

■ THIS QUESTION IS MEANT TO HELP COVER:

- THE REASONABLENESS OF BELIEVING IN GOD
- THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD-AS-TRINITY
- “GOD IS LOVE”
- GOD AS CREATOR – HOW AND WHY
- THE CORE TRUTH OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

# IF GOD IS GOOD, WHY EVIL? IF EVIL, WHERE IS GOD?

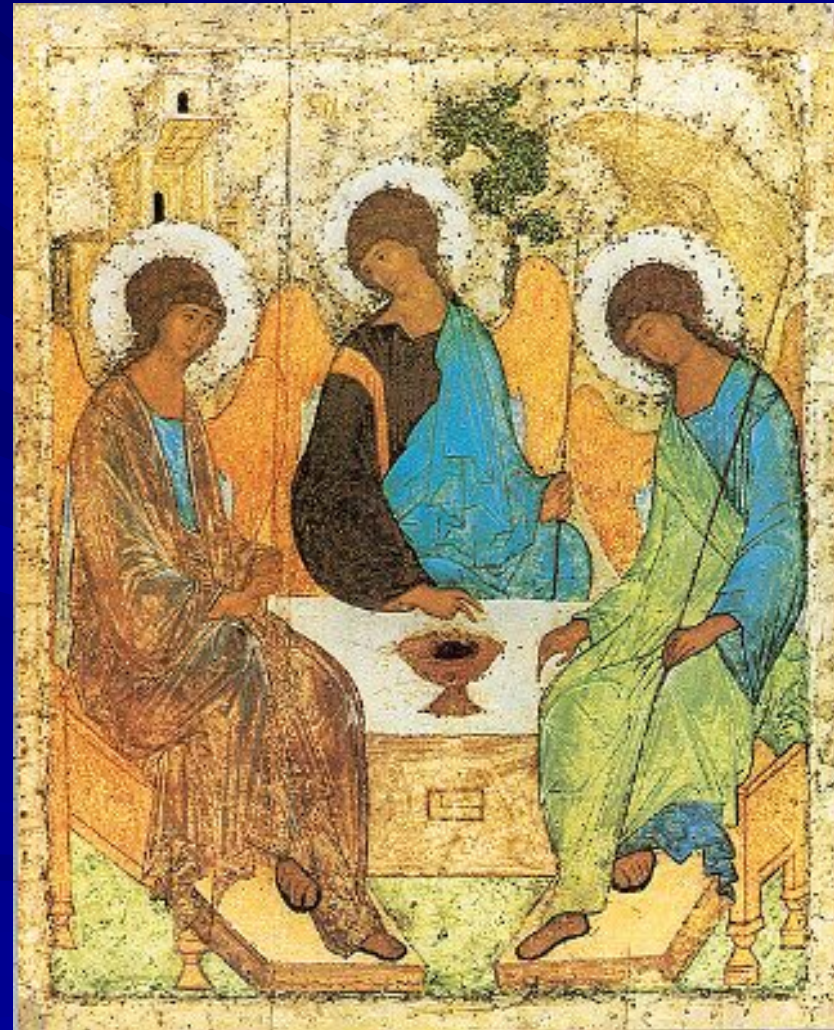
- THESE QUESTIONS ARE MEANT TO HELP PEOPLE THINK CLEARLY ABOUT:
  - THE TYPES OF EVIL THAT EXIST
  - THE ORIGIN OF EACH TYPE OF EVIL
  - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND A WORLD WHERE EVIL IS PRESENT

# HOW DO WE GET ON BOARD?

- A COMPREHENSIVE META-NARRATIVE RECOMMENDS PARTICULAR ACTION
- THIS QUESTION IS MEANT TO HELP PEOPLE RE-APPROPRIATE AN ACTIVE LIFE OF FAITH
  - THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL MEANS TO ENTER INTO GOD'S META-NARRATIVE
  - THE CHALLENGE OF CONVERSION: AN INITIAL AND CONTINUING PROCESS OF HAVING OUR INTERNAL META-NARRATIVE COME TO CORRESPOND WITH THE ACTUAL "WAY THINGS ARE"

# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

1. INSIGHT: BELIEF IN A SUPREME BEING IS HIGH-UNIVERSAL, AND REASONABLE
2. TOOL: THE ANALOGY OF THE MUSIC PLAYER (TO EXPLAIN THE TRINITY)
3. TOOL: THE RUBLEV ICON (TO EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD-AS-TRINITY)
4. TOOL: 1 JOHN 4: 8b (GOD IS LOVE)



# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

5. INSIGHT: CREATION IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS, NOT JUST A START IN TIME
6. TOOL: ANALOGY OF THE SINGER/ DANCER (HOW GOD CREATES, HOW GOD IS CLOSE)
7. INSIGHT: ALL CREATION IS STAMPED WITH A PRESENCE OF GOD (“SEEDS OF THE WORD”)
  - THIS EXPLAINS THE MULTIPLICITY OF FAITHS
8. INSIGHT: FREE WILL GIVES US THE CAPACITY TO LOVE, AND THEREFORE TO BECOME “LIKE GOD”
9. INSIGHT: THE MORAL LAW IS ALREADY PRESENT WITHIN HUMAN NATURE
  - TOOL: THE ANALOGY OF THE MICROWAVE OVEN

# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

## 10. INSIGHT: NATURE OF EVIL

- METAPHYSICAL AND PHYSICAL
  - TOOL: ANALOGY OF THE FLOODED DUCK
  - INSIGHT: HARMONY OF CREATION AS THE PART OF SOLUTION TO PHYSICAL EVIL
  - INSIGHT: CREATION PROGRESSING TO GREATER AND GREATER PERFECTION
- MORAL – ANGELIC AND HUMAN
  - TOOL: ANALOGY OF ROBOT ANGELS
  - INSIGHT: GOD RESPECTS FREE CHOICE

## 11. INSIGHT: MORAL EVIL IS THE SOURCE OF DISHARMONY THAT PROVOKES ALL EVIL

# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

12. INSIGHT: PART OF THE DISHARMONY EXISTS IN MAN HIMSELF (ORIGINAL SIN)
13. TOOL: ANALOGY OF THE POWER CORDS (PART I)
14. INSIGHT: THE DULLNESS BROUGHT ON BY THE CONSEQUENCES OF ORIGINAL SIN, AS WELL AS THE DEEPENING OF THIS DULLNESS THROUGH ACTUAL SIN, MEANS THAT GOD HAS HAD TO ACT GRADUALLY IN HISTORY
15. INSIGHT: OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S ACTION HAS HAD TO BE PREPARED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CORRECT CULTURE
16. INSIGHT: EVEN TODAY WE TEND TO RESIST THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S ACTION
  - TOOL: THE ANALOGY OF PUSHING THE BUTTON

# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

17. INSIGHT: CHRIST CAME AT A TIME WHEN PEOPLE WERE READY FOR FAITH
18. INSIGHT: CHRIST DIDN'T JUST COME TO TEACH, HE CAME TO RESTORE CREATION (IMPORTANCE OF HIS TWO NATURES)
  - INSIGHT: THE CORE OF THIS MISSION IS SEEN IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (IN HIS DEATH HE SAVES THE DEAD AND DEFEATS EVIL; IN HIS RESURRECTION BY THE SPIRIT HE INAUGURATES THE NEW CREATION)
19. INSIGHT: WE CAN BECOME INCORPORATED INTO CHRIST AND RECEIVE THE SPIRIT
  - TOOL: ANALOGY OF THE POWER CORDS (PART II)
20. INSIGHT: OUR CURRENT PHASE OF HISTORY SITS BETWEEN CHRIST AND ANTI-CHRIST

# META-NARRATIVE TOOLS AND INSIGHTS

21. INSIGHT: GOD CONTINUES TO TAKE HIS TIME, TO ALLOW EVERYONE A CHANCE TO COME TO HIM
22. INSIGHT: CHRIST HAS LEFT US SPIRITUAL TOOLS TO PROMOTE THE VICTORY OF THE GOSPEL
  - SCRIPTURE, SACRAMENTS, CHURCH
23. INSIGHT: EVERY OTHER ELEMENT OF CATHOLIC TEACHING (OR JUST TRUTH IN GENERAL) IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS META-NARRATIVE