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GOD THE ALMIGHTY FATHER

General Audience â€” September 18, 1985

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth...."

God who has revealed himself, the God of our faith, is an infinitely perfect spirit. We spoke of this in the previous catechesis. As an infinitely perfect spirit he is the absolute fullness of Truth and Goodness, and he desires to give himself. Goodness extends itself: bonum est diffusivum sui (Summa Theol., I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2).

The creeds express in a certain sense this truth about God viewed as the infinite fullness of goodness. They do this by affirming that God is the creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. It is fitting to examine here in the light of revelation that which in God corresponds to the mystery of creation, even though we shall deal with the truth about creation somewhat later.

The Church professes that God is omnipotent ("I believe in God, the Father Almighty") inasmuch as he is an infinitely perfect spirit. God is also omniscient, that is, his knowledge penetrates everything.

This omnipotent and omniscient God has the power to create, to call into being from non-being, from nothingness. We read in the Book of Genesis 18:14: "Is anything impossible for the Lord?"

The Book of Wisdom (11:21) states: "For it is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the might of your arm?" The Book of Esther professes the same faith in the words: "Lord, King who rules over the universe, all things are in your power and there is no one who can oppose you" (Esther 4:17b). The Archangel Gabriel will say to Mary of Nazareth at the Annunciation: "With God nothing is impossible" (Lk 1:37).

God, who reveals himself by the mouth of the prophets, is omnipotent. These truths run deeply through the whole of revelation, beginning with the first words of the Book of Genesis: "God said: 'Let there be...'" (Gen 1:3). The creative act is manifested as the all-powerful word of God: "For he spoke, and it came to be..." (Ps 33:9). By creating

everything from nothing, being from non-being, God reveals himself as the infinite fullness of goodness which extends itself. He who is, Subsisting Being, infinitely perfect Being, in a certain sense gives himself in that "is," by calling into existence outside of himself the visible and invisible cosmos—the created beings. By creating things he begins the history of the universe. By creating man as male and female he begins the history of humanity. As Creator he is the Lord of history. "There are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one" (1 Cor 12:6).

The God who reveals himself as Creator, and so as Lord of the history of the world and of humanity, is the omnipotent God, the living God.... According to the First Vatican Council: "The Church believes and acknowledges that there exists one only living and true God, creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent" (DS 3001). This God, a spirit infinitely perfect and omniscient, is absolutely free and sovereign even in regard to the very act of creation. He is first of all Lord of his own will in the work of creation if he is the Lord of all that he creates. He creates because he wills to create. He creates because this is in accordance with his infinite wisdom. In creating he acts with the inscrutable fullness of his liberty, under the impulse of eternal love.

The text of the First Vatican Council's Constitution *Dei Filius*, already quoted on several occasions, emphasizes God's absolute liberty in creation and in his every action. God is "most happy in himself and of himself." He possesses the complete fullness of goodness and happiness in himself and of himself. He does not call the world into existence in order to complete or integrate the goodness which he is. He creates solely and exclusively for the purpose of bestowing the goodness of a manifold existence on the world of invisible and visible creatures. It is a multiple and varied participation of the unique, infinite, eternal good, which is identical with the very Being of God.

God is absolutely free and sovereign in the work of creation. He remains fundamentally independent of the created universe. This does not in any way imply that he is indifferent in regard to creatures. Rather, he guides them as Eternal Wisdom, Love and Omnipotent Providence.

Sacred Scripture sets out the fact that in this work God is alone. The prophet Isaiah declares "I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth—who was with me?" (Is 44:24). God's sovereign liberty and his paternal omnipotence stand out in his "solitude" in the work of creation.

"The God who formed and created the earth and established it, did not create it as a chaos, but formed it to be inhabited" (Is 45:18).

The Church professes from the very beginning her faith in the "Almighty Father," creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. She does so in the light of the self-revelation of God who "spoke by the prophets and in these last days...by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2). This omnipotent God is also omniscient and omnipresent. Or better, one could say that, as an infinitely perfect spirit, God is simultaneously Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence.

God is first of all present to himselfâ€”in his One and Triune Divinity. He is also present in the universe which he has created. His presence is a consequence of the work of creation by means of his creative power (per potentiam), which makes present his transcendental Essence itself (per essentiam). This presence surpasses the world, penetrates it and keeps it in existence. The same can be repeated of God's presence through his knowledge, as the infinite glance which sees, penetrates and scrutinizes everything (per visionem or per scientiam). Finally, God is present in a special way in human history, which is also the history of salvation. This is (if one may say so) the most "personal" presence of Godâ€”his presence through grace, which humanity received in its fullness in Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:16-17). We shall speak of this last mystery of the faith in a proximate catechesis.

"O Lord, you search me and you know me..." (Ps 139:1).

Let us profess together with the entire People of God present in every part of the world, while we repeat the inspired words of this Psalm, our faith in the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of God who is our Creator, Father and Providence! "In him...we live, and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).