

Introducing the Unknown God Sixth Week of Easter Wednesday, May 24, 2017
8:15 AM **Acts 17:15, 22—18:1;** Jn 16:12-15 (It is remarkably difficult to convince people of the truth.)

“God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent because he has established a day on which he will ‘judge the world with justice’ through a man he has appointed, and he has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead.”

This entire reading from the Acts of the Apostles is a very good starting point for any discussion on so-called interreligious dialogue because, on the one hand, it acknowledges that everyone is seeking God or could be seeking God. Anyway **it is a human trait to seek God and that these people in Greece in a pagan temple had an altar to an Unknown God** and Paul says, well, “I will tell you what this Unknown God is like.” So in one way it’s very inclusive. It’s opening doors and saying, you’re already seeking this and now I’ll show you the way to understand more fully the nature of the Unknown God.

But on the other hand, the Unknown God is not simply one out of many. And that’s where biblical faith differs from all the other types of religions that have existed up to that point, up until the time of the Bible because, yes, **people perceive certain qualities that might rightly be attributed to God, the true God, but everything was always perceived as simply one of many** leading to many different types of gods, for example. And they all had many conflicting qualities. And on the whole, the gods were seen as in conflict with each other; so there was no harmony in the heavens, so to speak; there was no overall sense of unity to the creation.

What the **Bible** began was an idea that, no, **there is this fundamental sense of unity because there is only one God, and this one God created everything for harmony**, although the harmony has been disturbed by human activity and perhaps activity of other beings.

So Paul goes on to describe what the God revealed in Christ is like, inviting people then to open themselves to this, which some did, but some did not, because **the amount of twisted ideas about God and reality that exists in the world are indeed many**, and the convictions that people have that these twisted ideas are correct are also very pronounced in our world. So it is a true enterprise that St. Paul and the other apostles were engaging in, trying to convince people of the truth. And it is remarkably difficult—**it is remarkably difficult to convince people of the truth**. And that itself reveals something about our human situation.