

Slow Religion The Foundations of Christian Faith in the 21st Century

The Slow Religion: The Foundations of Christian Faith explores the core beliefs and experiences of the Christian faith and invites reflection in our 21st Century/Covid-19 pandemic context. The series is led by Joe Jennings, the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun (St. Stephens Church), the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer (Church of our Saviour), and Nancy Clark (St. Mary the Virgin) and is organized into two sets: first, the historical context and development of the faith; and, second topical examinations of belief and how to apply those today.

The topics include: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Incarnation, Resurrection, Forgiveness of Sins and Eternal Life. Each subject will include a brief presentation to give historical and textual content, readings in the Bible, creeds and prayers from multiple sources, and then questions for reflection and discussion.

CLASS #4 INCARNATION

Incarnation: God made flesh in Jesus Christ¹

1. What is incarnation – an Introduction
2. The Epistles and early Baptismal Creeds (50-110 CE)
3. Synoptic Gospels (70-90 CE)
4. Gospel of St. John (90-110 CE)
5. Evolution in the Creeds (40-450 CE)
6. Augustine and later theologians (400 CE +)
7. 21st Century Incarnational Theology² (Richard Rohr, the Rev. Vincent Pizzuto)

SUBJECT

Mark: 8:29 “He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?””

One of the core questions about Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus Christ is who was or is he? Whatever the answer was before the resurrection, and we will never know, the answer among his followers after the resurrection was a combination of the Messiah, the Son of God, and upon several decades of reflection and experience, God incarnate.

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28³

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever
hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have
given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with
you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ We are moving backward and forward in time in the first and second century CE. From the early Church backward into the OT and forward into the creeds, incarnational insights, trinity and prayer life.

² Look at Creation Theology – from the Big bang.

³ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

BRIEF OVERVIEW

What Is incarnation?

Incarnate: invested with bodily and especially human nature and form; b : made manifest or comprehensible

Origin: late Middle English: from ecclesiastical Latin incarnat- 'made flesh', from the verb incarnare, from in- 'into' + caro, carn- 'flesh'.⁴

The Incarnation: "the belief in Jesus Christ as both God and a human being."⁵

Incarnation: a central doctrine of Christian faith which affirms that in Jesus of Nazareth, God has fully communicated the divine self to humanity and as a consequence raised humanity to a full participant in the life of the Trinity.⁶

Why incarnation?

- Anthropocentric: Due to human sinfulness: God created the world, Adam sinned, and Incarnation was God's response to save us from sin.
- Christocentric: Creation, Incarnation and Resurrection are all linked – St. Francis, Thomas Merton and Richard Rohr among others believed that the connection is God's love for creation and desire to share God's divinity with creation (The Franciscan view)

"Incarnation was not an afterthought by God after creation did not work out. Creation, incarnation and deification are three inseparable moments in one continuous story of salvation. Incarnation and deification are built into the very plan of creation and bring it to perfection."⁷

"Christianity is fundamentally optimistic toward the human condition. The divine response to sin is not condemnation but healing grace. Grace is the very presence of the Spirit in the midst of our own suffering and brokenness."⁸

What did incarnation mean to early Christians?

From the earliest times Jesus was regarded as in some way specially revealing God. If Jesus sits at God's right hand then God must have certain character and purpose for the world.⁹

Acts 7:56

56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

The statement in Acts 7:56 is nothing less than a description of the character of God. The supreme God is in essence similar to Jesus; a monarch will choose a man of his own ideals and temperament to be his

⁴ Merriam Webster

⁵ Merriam Webster

⁶ The Rev. Vincent Pizzuto, *Contemplating Christ Notes*

⁷ The Rev. Vincent Pizzuto, *Contemplating Christ Notes*

⁸ The Rev. Vincent Pizzuto, *Contemplating Christ Notes*

⁹ Alan Richardson, "Creeds in the Making" Notes

right hand man. God's love will no way be inferior to the love of Jesus. If this statement is true, then our view of the universe and human destiny will be profoundly modified.

This is the meaning of the Christian Doctrine of Incarnation. The character of God is at least as good as that of Jesus because in Jesus the character of God is revealed.

- Peter and Jesus' companions had difficulty understanding how the person they knew could be elevated?
- Paul and the later advocates had difficulty understanding how the Cosmic Christ who sits at the right hand of God have been a carpenter's son from Nazareth?

The early church answered both questions with the passion story – how Jesus was crucified and resurrected. The conclusion was that "Surely this man was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39)

Jesus was regarded as being in some way the manifestation of God's character, love and power which then raised Jesus from the dead. It was a new definition of power. It showed itself in weakness and humility. The power of God could be revealed in the weak things of the world.

The humility of Jesus made a profound impression in the 1st-2nd Century CE world in which the virtue was almost unknown.

This revelation of his own nature made by God through the Person of Jesus Christ is the theme of every book of the NT.

What are the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke?

See readings.

How did the early church struggle with incarnation?

Good news = Gospel = Euangelion

In Paul the *Good News* starts with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Mark the *Good News* starts at the river Jordan and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. In Matthew and Luke the *Good News* starts at the nativity. In John, the *Good News* starts before time and with God and the Word. Incarnation thus emerges in Matthew, Luke and is the opener in John and is present in Paul as a proclamation.

Incarnation is thus the result of reflection on Jesus and the Resurrection and the movement back in time to understand how resurrection could have occurred and what it meant about Jesus.

To understand Christian doctrine we need a clear understanding of the historical facts that the doctrine was invented to explain. The chief fact which called for explanation was the disciples experience of the resurrection and living with the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

This theology of resurrection is vitally important to people trying not to build a new heaven, but a new earth.

The belief in the resurrection of Jesus makes and molds our conduct.

How did the 1st Century CE Jews and early Christians define "Son of God"?

There is a tension between Christ (Messiah in Gk) and Son of God.

Mark 1 (NRSV)

¹⁰ Alan Richardson, Creeds notes

1 The beginning of the good news[a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[b]

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved;[h] with you I am well pleased.”

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

Footnotes

Mark 1:1 Or gospel

Mark 1:1 Other ancient authorities lack the Son of God

Christ, in the early Jewish-Christian sect, meant anyone anointed. Properly speaking, anointing was to elevate a male to King of Israel. Since the fall of the Jewish monarchy, the Jewish community was looking for a new king.¹¹

The title “God’s Son”, or “Son of God “ was a more vague title, that suggested someone who shared in God’s divine power of righteousness. In 1st Century CE a son would share in his father’s social status and authority and would loyally serve his father. Hence Son of God suggests a person exercising divine authority or was excellent in loyalty to God.¹² (See Exodus 4:22¹³, Psalm 2:6-7¹⁴, and Matt 5:9¹⁵ for references.)

In contrast, Paul and John, redefine the Son of God title as the *actual* Son of God – an incarnation of God in the flesh. (See Romans 1:3-4¹⁶, 1 Cor 15:28¹⁷ and Rom 8:14¹⁸.)

In Mark’s Gospel Jesus is the Messiah, or king, not of this world, but the world to come, for he exercises the full authority of God on earth.¹⁹ Though interestingly, in Mark’s Gospel Jesus is anointed and then immediately tempted by Satan, and when he heals a man with an unclean spirit, Jesus tells the unclean spirit who recognizes him as the Holy One to be silent.

What does it mean today? Why is it important? Cosmic Christ

¹¹ Scott Sinclair, A Study Guide to Mark’s Gospel Notes

¹² Scott Sinclair, A Study Guide to Mark’s Gospel Notes

¹³ Exodus 4:22 NRSV 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son.”

¹⁴ Psalm 2:6-7 (NRSV)

6 “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.”

7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord:

He said to me, “You are my son;

today I have begotten you.

¹⁵ Matthew 5:9 (NRSV) 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁶ Romans 1:3-4 (NRSV) 3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit[a] of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Footnotes: Romans 1:4 Or Spirit

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:28 (NRSV) 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

¹⁸ Romans 8:14 (NRSV) 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁹ Scott Sinclair, A Study Guide to Mark’s Gospel Notes

The revelation of the Risen Christ as ubiquitous and eternal was affirmed by Scripture (Colossians 1; Ephesians 1, John 1, Hebrews 1)²⁰

The essential function of religion is to radically connect us with everything (Re-ligio = to re-ligament or reconnect.)

Acts 10:34-5 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Acts 10:15, 34: The Cosmic Christ includes everyone and everything. Christ is everywhere. In Him every kind of life has meaning and a solid connection.

Incarnation, that God is in everything and everyone is the core idea of reimagining Christianity in the world today. Jesus was born into a Christ infused universe. The Incarnation occurred and continues to occur as God indwells in everything and everyone.

The self-disclosure of God in creation was the first Incarnation – embodiment of spirit in material stuff. This happened before the second incarnation, the embodiment of the word in flesh – Jesus – in Franciscan terms the creation is the First Bible, that existed for 13.7 billion years before the second Bible was written.

Genesis 1: God joined in unity with the physical universe and became the light in everything
Incarnation is thus God in everything, and God in Jesus/human form.

Everything visible without exception is the outpouring of God. Long before Jesus incarnation, the Christ was deeply embedded in everything.

So Jesus was born into a Christ-infused world – the second incarnation flowed out of the first.

This is a reframing of the incarnation – of who and what God is

²⁰ Richard Rohr, Universal Christ Notes

READINGS²¹

Gen 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Gen 1:26-28

Then God said, “Let us make humankind[c] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,[d] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

27 So God created humankind[e] in his image,
in the image of God he created them;[f]
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Gen 2:4-7

In the day that the Lord[a] God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground,[b] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Isaiah 7:14

7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman[e] is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.[f]

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

²¹ All Bible readings based on the New Revised Standard Version)

Colossians 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in[h] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in[i] him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Galatians 4:4-7

4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our[b] hearts, crying, “Abba! [c] Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. [d]

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus,
 6 who, though he was in the form of God,
 did not regard equality with God
 as something to be exploited,
 7 but emptied himself,
 taking the form of a slave,
 being born in human likeness.
 And being found in human form,
 8 he humbled himself
 and became obedient to the point of death—
 even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
 and gave him the name
 that is above every name,
 10 so that at the name of Jesus
 every knee should bend,
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 11 and every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 1:1-4

1:1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,[a] whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. 3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains[b] all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Hebrews 2:14-18

14 Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. 16 For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters[n] in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the

people. 18 Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Mark 1:1-11

1:1 The beginning of the good news[a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[b]

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,[c]

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,[d]
who will prepare your way;

3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

4 John the baptizer appeared[e] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with[f] water; but he will baptize you with[g] the Holy Spirit.”

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved;[h] with you I am well pleased.”

Mark 8:27-29

8:27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29 He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”[h]

Matthew 1:18-25

1:18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[i] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
which means, “God is with us.”

24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;[j] and he named him Jesus.

Luke 1:26-38

1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [b] 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [c]

35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born [d] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

John 1:1-18

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, [a] and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. [b]

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, [c] and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, [d] full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, [e] who is close to the Father's heart, [f] who has made him known.

Early Creeds Hippolytus²²

“12When each of them to be baptized has gone down into the water, the one baptizing shall lay hands on each of them, asking, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" 13And the one being baptized shall answer, "I believe."

14He shall then baptize each of them once, laying his hand upon each of their heads. 15Then he shall ask, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose on the third day living from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, the one coming to judge the living and the dead?" 16When each has answered, "I believe," he shall baptize a second time.

17Then he shall ask, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Church and the resurrection of the flesh?" 18Then each being baptized shall answer, "I believe." And thus let him baptize the third time.”

Early Baptismal Creed²³:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty;
And in Jesus Christ His Only Son, Our Lord,
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,
On the third day he rose again from the dead,
Ascended into heaven, sits on the right hand of the Father
When He will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church,
the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the flesh.”

²² Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, Chapter 21, Source: Robert F. Evans, *Making Sense of the Creeds*. Saint Hippolytus of Rome, (born c. 170—died c. 235)

²³ Also present in the early 200s in the Rome Church was a different baptismal creed as a statement of faith. Source: Robert F. Evans, *Making Sense of the Creeds*

Creeds

The Apostles' Creed²⁴

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the

Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting.

Amen.

The Nicene Creed²⁵²⁶

We believe in one God,
 the Father, the Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit
 he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
 and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the

Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
 the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come.
 Amen.

²⁴ Britannica: The present text of the Apostles' Creed is similar to the baptismal creed used in the church in Rome in the 3rd and 4th centuries. It reached its final form in southwestern France in the late 6th or early 7th century. Gradually it replaced other baptismal creeds and was acknowledged as the official statement of faith of

the entire Catholic church in the West by the time that Innocent III was pope (1198–1216).

²⁵ Nicene Creed, The Episcopal Church, Source: <https://episcopalchurch.org/creeds>

²⁶ Britannica: promulgated at the Council of Nicaea (325) amended at the Council of Constantinople (381).

Augustine²⁷

“The Word of the Father, by whom all time was created, was made flesh and was born in time for us.

He, without whose divine permission no day completes its course, wished to have one day [set aside] for His human birth. In the bosom of His Father, He existed before all the cycles of ages; born of an earthly Mother, He entered upon the course of the years on this day.

The Maker of man became Man that He, Ruler of the stars, might be nourished at the breast; that He, the Bread, might be hungry; that He, the Fountain, might thirst; that He, the Light, might sleep; that He, the Way, might be wearied by the journey; that He, the Truth, might be accused by false witnesses; that He, the Judge of the living and the dead, might be brought to trial by a mortal judge; that He, Justice, might be condemned by the unjust; that He, the Teacher, might be scourged with whips; that He, the Vine, might be crowned with thorns; that He, the Foundation, might be suspended upon a cross; that Strength might be weakened; that He who makes well might be wounded; that Life might die.

To endure these and similar indignities for us, to free us, unworthy creatures, He who existed as the Son of God before all ages, without a beginning, deigned to become the Son of Man in these recent years. He did this although He who submitted to such great evils for our sake had done no evil, and although we, who were the recipients of so much good at His hands, had done nothing to merit these benefits. Begotten by the Father, He was not made by the Father; He was made Man in the Mother whom He Himself had made, so that He might exist here for a while, sprung from her who could never and nowhere have existed except through His power.”

**Definition of the Union of the Divine and Human Natures in the Person of Christ²⁸
Council of Chalcedon, 451 A.D., Act V**

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (homoousios) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (Theotokos); one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

Quicumque Vult, The Creed of Saint Athanasius²⁹

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory

²⁷²⁷ St. Augustine, (354-430), For the Feast of the Nativity, Sermon 191

²⁸ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, pp 867

²⁹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, pp 864-5

equal, the Majesty co-eternal.
 Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
 The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
 The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost
 incomprehensible.
 The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
 And yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal.
 As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and
 one incomprehensible.
 So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
 And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty.
 So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
 And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
 So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.
 And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.
 For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by
 himself to be both God and Lord,
 So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion, to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.
 The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.
 The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.
 The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten,
 but proceeding.
 So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three
 Holy Ghosts.
 And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another;
 But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.
 So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be
 worshipped.
 He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the
 Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of
 God, is God and Man;
 God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance
 of his Mother, born in the world;
 Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
 Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his
 manhood;
 Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;
 One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God;
 One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person.
 For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ;
 Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.
 He ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from
 whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead.
 At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their
 own works.
 And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into
 everlasting fire.
 This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

Martin Luther³⁰

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."

""The manger and the cross are never far apart."

II. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man.³¹

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

PRAYERS**2 Corinthians 13:13**

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of[e] the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Footnotes

(e) 2 Corinthians 13:13 Or and the sharing in

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, 4 who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus,
6 who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess

³⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986).

³¹ *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*, Pp 868

that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary[f] said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

CANTICLES AND COLLECTS IN CELEBRATION OF THE INCARNATION

The Song of Mary (Magnificat) -- Luke 1:46-55

And Mary[f] said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
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and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The Song of Zachariah (Benedictus) -- Luke 1:68-79

The Song of Simeon -- Luke 2:29-32

Collect for the Annunciation (March 25) -- BCP: p. 240

Collect for the Visitation (May 25) -- BCP: p. 240

The Presentation (February 2) -- BCP: p. 239

Collect for St. Mary the Virgin (August 15) -- BCP: p. 243

Preface of the Incarnation (used during Epiphany Season) -- BCP: p. 378

Christmas Hymn # 82 (words by Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius) 348-410 CE

REFLECTIONS

1. How do we discern God's presence and command and how do we respond when God becomes active in our lives?
2. How are we evolving in our understanding of the incarnation?
3. How is our experience shaping our view of the creed?