

His name shall be  
GOD WITH US!

Knights . . .  
His name . . .  
ADT 2266



- What Do You Think of The Christ?
- Preach the Good News . . . I Am With You All Days
- Never Has Man Spoken as This Man
- Even Unto the End of Time . . .
- We Cannot but Speak What We Have Seen and Heard
- God the Mighty, My Lord and My God

# *Why the Knights of Columbus Advertise Catholic Faith*

The reason is simple. We Catholics want our non-Catholic friends and neighbors to know us as we really are and not as we are some times mistakenly represented.

We are confident that when our religious Faith is better understood by those who do not share it, mutual understanding will promote the good-will which is so necessary in a predominantly Christian country whose government is designed to serve all the people—no matter how much their religious convictions may differ.

American Catholics are convinced that as the teachings of Christ widely and firmly take hold of the hearts and conduct of our people, we shall remain free in the sense that Christ promised (John VIII, 31-38), and in the manner planned by the Founding Fathers of this republic.

Despite the plainly stated will of the Good Shepherd that there be "one fold and one shepherd," the differences in the understanding of Christ's teaching are plainly evident. It has rightfully been called "the scandal of a divided Christianity."

If there is anything which will gather together the scattered flock of Christ, it is the nationwide understanding of the Savior, what He did and how He intended mankind to benefit by the Redemption.

To this end, we wish our fellow-Americans to become acquainted with the teachings of Christ as the Catholic Church has faithfully presented them, since the day the apostles invaded the nations of the world in willing and courageous obedience to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. XXVIII, 19).

**SUPREME COUNCIL  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
Religious Information Bureau**

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# WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CHRIST?



Millions of men have lived on this universe, yet only one Man could say in His own right and back up His words with proof: "Which of you can convict me of sin" (John 8:46)? Hundreds of men over the ages have been teachers of their fellowmen, hundreds have pointed out the way life should be lived, hundreds have led others of their fellow beings, but not one of them dared say of himself as did this Man: "I AM the way, and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Many claimed to be sent by God, some truly, some falsely. Yet not one of these men sent by God or claiming to be sent by Him, heard a voice that said: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

This man was **JESUS CHRIST!** He made claims for Himself that drew down upon Himself either the love of men or their hatred. In his Gospel, St. John records these opposite reactions to His beloved Master (7:12-13): "And there was much whispered comment among the crowd concerning him. For some were saying, 'He is a good man.' But others were saying, 'No, rather he

seduces the crowd.'" There were the thousands who followed Him into the desert, forgetting to bring food and water with them, so enthralled were they with His teaching and His presence (cf. Mark 6:34-44). But "the chief priests and the Pharisees therefore gathered together a council, and said,

'What are we doing? For this man is working many signs. If we let him alone as he is, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiphias, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all; nor do you reflect that it is expedient for us that one man die for the people, instead of the whole nation perishing'" (John 11:47-50).

Of all His claims there was one that ultimately brought Him to His death on the cross; that claim was: **THE SON OF GOD!** When Christ uttered these profound words, "I and the Father are one," we are told by St. John in his Gospel (10:30-33) that "the Jews therefore took up stones to stone him . . . 'not for a good work do we stone thee, but for blasphemy and because thou, being

a man, makest thyself God.” Again we are told by St. John (5:16-18) that the “Jews kept persecuting Jesus . . . because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal to God.”

Before the Sanhedrin, the Great Council of the Jews, Jesus Christ proclaimed his divine filiation. When asked by the high priest, “Art thou the Christ, the SON OF THE BLESSED ONE?” he answered, “I AM” (Mark 14:61-62).

### **I Am The Son of God**

Such then was Christ’s claim: I AM THE SON OF GOD. From the human viewpoint we understand without any difficulty the stumbling block that this claim was to those who saw and heard Him. They saw a man, one like unto themselves. They heard Him speak as they spoke. Many of them knew His background and His family. When he returned to Nazareth, St. Mark records the astonishment of those who heard Him as He taught in the synagogue (6:1-3): “Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary . . . ?”

Of all people in the world the Jews should have been better acquainted with things divine than other nations. Even they, as they reviewed their glorious history, did not find any of their great prophets, no, not even Moses and Abraham, claiming to be God or the Son of God. They were men of God, They were close to God. He spoke through them; but they were not divine. But this man calmly announced “I and the Father are one” and He accepted as the truth the

statement of Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

If then Jesus Christ claimed to be divine and proved it, we in this modern age must pause and consider this claim. Of what importance is it to us that a man living so long ago called Himself the Son of God? We believe that as men we have an eternal destiny. We believe that there is nothing in all the world so important as the eternal salvation of our souls. This same Jesus Christ put it very bluntly and concisely: “For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul” (Matthew 16:26)? If the value of the soul is not accepted, then the very foundation for the importance of Jesus Christ to the individual is snuffed out. He may still be a great teacher. He may even be the Son of God as He claimed, but Jesus Christ in this supposition has lost all reason for coming into the world, for He came to redeem men (cf. John 11:51-52; I Timothy 1:15).

Herein precisely is the significance and importance of the claim of Jesus Christ to be divine. He must be what He claims to be, otherwise men are not saved. God could not save men through an imposter. God is Truth itself; He cannot tolerate lies. It would be blasphemy to think that He accepted the death of an imposter to redeem the souls of men from sin. St. Paul stated in explicit terms that God “set forth (Jesus Christ) as a propitiation by his blood through faith, to manifest his justice . . .” (Romans 3:25). St. Peter is no less explicit: “Neither is there salvation in any

other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

It does not make any difference then whether a man lived before Christ or was living at the same time of Christ, or is living now, or will live many thousands of years hence. Christ is the Savior of all; all men have souls. These souls can be saved in only one way, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. "For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

### **"Without ME, You Can Do Nothing"**

Let this be accepted: there is nothing so important as the salvation of my soul. This salvation comes through Jesus Christ, Who claimed to be the Son of God. At once it is seen that acceptance of Jesus Christ and His claim to be the son of God is capital, nay, necessary, for the salvation of souls.

Not only then is it important to believe in Jesus Christ as divine, it is necessary! There is no harm in being without important things, but it matters a great deal to be without necessary ones. It may be important to have the right clothes for the right occasion, but it is not a matter of life and death. But it is necessary to have food and drink, for this is a matter of life and death. As we have seen, nothing is more important to us than the salvation of our souls; to save our souls Jesus Christ is necessary. This means that we can't be saved without Him (cf.

John 15:5). He is necessary to salvation.

When He gave His apostles their commission to go and teach, He indicates this necessity (Mark 16: 15-16): "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned." Now the gospel or good news is this: that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save souls (cf. Acts 4:12; I Timothy 1:15).

There is then no question of being indifferent to Jesus Christ and His claim to be divine. There is no question of accepting Him as an important figure in our lives. There is question of believing in Him, and accepting Him, as the necessary means of salvation. As we cannot live without food and drink, as we cannot breathe without air, so neither can we save our souls without Jesus Christ. To hear Him or of Him, and not to believe in Him is to incur God's wrath. "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; he who is unbelieving towards the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him (John 3:36).

Modern progress has caused many things to seem necessary for life, not merely to live, but for life! Life without all the modern conveniences of the home seems intolerable. These things have assumed a necessary aspect in our daily life, and more, to life itself. The result has been a dulling of the appreciation of what is *really* necessary to life and to living.

A moment's reflection will make us realize that what is often considered to be necessary is not so at all. A man shaves every day until it seems to be a necessity. If some morning shaving is found inconvenient, he realizes that the necessary element was due only to his habit. He realizes too that he is no less a man with a stubble of beard on his face!

On one occasion (Matthew 10: 27) our Lord told His Apostles to preach "on the housetops" what He had whispered to them. "On the housetops" as well as in every possible place the necessity of Jesus Christ should be preached. In every possible place men should reflect on the salvation of their souls, a salvation that comes to them through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and equal to the Father in all things. Such preaching and reflection would make men realize what is *really* necessary. St. Paul has linked up Jesus Christ and salvation in these words (Romans 10:9): "For if thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and believe in thy heart that God has raised him from the death, thou shalt be saved."

Jesus Christ Himself came into this world to teach and to preach His divinity. He went up and down Palestine, gathering crowds around Him, to imprint on their hearts the plan of God for their salvation. He went further. He allowed Himself to be nailed to a cross, there to preach salvation from sin through His death. When He ascended into heaven, He sent others to preach and teach His gospel, His good

news. He left His Church to carry on this same mission of saving souls. That Church, the Catholic Church, has never ceased to preach and to teach that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world as the Savior of all men. That Church has never ceased to preach belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It continues to preach that He died for all men, because His Father "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting (John 3:16).

### For This I Came Into The World

The question of the divinity of Christ therefore is not a question to be discussed only in dusty theological volumes or by learned scholars of the Church. It is THE vital question of every man. "Who do men say the Son of Man is?" is the most important question anyone can ask himself. It is the necessary question everyone must ask himself, for the answer is the answer of eternal salvation.

Necessity is not always regarded as a "nice word" today. In matters of daily life necessity is accepted without too much reflection; to live means the necessity of eating and drinking and working and resting. The necessity of saving one's soul must be faced; what is necessary to save one's soul must also be faced. Otherwise the consequences must be accepted. To have the opportunity to save one's soul through belief in Jesus Christ is a God-given boon. To reject this opportunity is to invite the consequences.

This is the necessity for all men in relation to the divinity of Christ. It cannot be shrugged off with indifference, any more than it could be when Christ lived. Either He is accepted for what He is, the son of God, or the consequences must be suffered. There is no middle of the road. He Himself has put it in language that cannot be misunderstood (Matthew 12:30): "He who is not with me is against me."

### There Is No Other Way

The necessity then to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God is one that brings with it a duty. That duty is one of conscience, a moral duty then. True, man is free; he has the right of choice. But this privilege of freedom, of right of choice, brings responsibilities. Man has no right to say to God: I'll worship you as I will, or I'll do as I please and as I want to do. Yes, man is free and he may say this; but if he does, he must suffer the consequences for he is responsible for the use of his freedom. Adam used his freedom and tried to be like unto God in his own way; he, you and I, all of us are suffering the consequences.

God sent His Son into the world to redeem us. God the Father told us (Luke 9:35): "This is my beloved Son; HEAR HIM." This Son told us in plain language that He was the Son of God, and that those who believed in Him would be saved. There is a choice then: a choice between accepting Christ and rejecting Him. Man is free; yes, he may make this choice, but he should not make it the wrong

way. If he does, he must accept the full responsibility.

Because man has an eternal destiny, he must strive to attain it. No one knows better how to attain it than God Who has destined man for eternal life. No one knows what God the Father wants better than His Son. God the Father told us to listen to His Son (cf. Matthew 17:5). But who is this Son? This is the question of questions. Peter's answer was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Christ's own answer rings in our ears. In answer to the question "tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," He said that He was (cf. Matthew 26:63-64). This was blasphemy to those who heard Him, because to them this meant that He claimed to be GOD. Those who listened to Him on another occasion attacked Him because He "called God his Father, making himself equal to God" (John 5:18). He was claiming to be God; such was the conclusion of those who heard Him. He was claiming to be as divine as God the Father: such was the challenge hurled at Him. He accepted it because it was true.

The question of the divinity of Jesus Christ then is not an indifferent one, to be pushed aside with the remark that it is a question for theologians and not for the ordinary lay person. This is a question for all men to answer; and all men must face their conscience with the answer they give. One day they shall face their God, and the question He will ask will be: What Do You Think of My Son, Jesus Christ?

# NEVER HAS MAN SPOKEN AS THIS MAN

There are solemn moments in the lives of all men. It is only when the lives of these men affect the lives of millions of others that those moments become most solemn and that those moments should be studied and pondered upon by those thus affected. The life of Jesus Christ affects all men, for "without me you can do nothing," words which He spoke, are for all (John 15:5). As a result His solemn moments are moments of significance and of lasting importance for all men.

The most solemn moment of His life came the night before He died. Jesus Christ was standing as a prisoner before the highest court in all the land of Israel. He was standing before the High Priest and his colleagues, who made up the Sanhedrin (The Great Council). This Sanhedrin governed religious matters for the Jews; it was then an authoritative body. It had the right to look into the teachings of all who claimed the right to teach among the Jews.

For Jesus Christ this was the moment of final witness. As He had said on one occasion, He had



come to give witness to the truth. The truth was that He came from God, that He was sent from God, and that He was the long-heralded and long-expected Messiah of Israel. Time and again He had borne witness to these truths before the people and before His followers. Now He stood

before the Great Council. Now He could bear witness to His mission and His claims before the High Priest and his colleagues.

We must re-live this solemn moment as found in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 27, verses 62 to 66: "Then the high priest, standing up, said to him, 'Dost thou make no answer to the things that these men prefer against thee?' But Jesus kept silence. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, THE SON OF GOD.' Jesus said to him, 'THOU HAST SAID IT. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming upon the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his garments, saying, 'He has blasphemed;



what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?' And they answered and said, 'He is liable to death.'"

Note the various circumstances of the scene. It is the High Priest, the religious leader of the Jews, the representative of God before them, who is asking the question. He uses an oath, "I adjure thee by the living God," to show the solemnity of the question. He asks Christ whether or not He is the Messiah (the Christ), the Son of God. Christ answers even though He knew only too well the outcome: His condemnation and His death. He answers in the affirmative, for the phrase "Thou hast said it," means "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God." He adds to His affirmation by stating clearly that His place is at the right hand of God. The High Priest and all with him accuse Him of blasphemy, for He was claiming a divine origin as the Son of God.

Jesus Christ then claimed and asserted that He was the Son of God. Since His life was to affect the lives of all men, this claim must be examined. For if it is false, then the lives of all men will suffer. For this man came and He said He was from God. He told all men that "he who believes (in Me and in My gospel) and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). If His claim is false, then vain is the teaching that He has saved us from our sins and has reopened to us the gates of heaven.

If His words are true, all men must listen to Him. They must ac-

cept His teachings and they must become His followers. For all men come from God and are going to God. If God has sent His Son into the world, all must listen to Him, as the voice of God the Father has testified (Matthew 17:5): "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." HEAR HIM: Obey Him, follow Him, for He has the words of eternal life.

### **This Is My Beloved Son**

The High Priest and his associates took the words of our Lord at their face value. They would not have condemned Him for blasphemy if they had considered these words in any other way. Before Pilate, this was the final charge brought against Him: "We have a Law, and according to that Law he must die, because he has made himself Son of God" (John 19:7). It was for this that Christ was condemned to death.

What provoked the High Priest to ask our Lord such a question? Not everyone is asked if he is the Son of God! The reason is to be found in our Lord's well-known claims. He had claimed to be the Son of God, to be one with God, Whom He called His Father.

There is no better place to begin with these claims than with the words of God, the Father. At the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist as found in Matthew, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17, we hear the voice from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This voice is from God, Who calls Jesus Christ "My beloved Son." The Father is well

pleased in Him because He is His only-begotten Son.

In chapter 5 of St. John's Gospel in sentence after sentence our Lord indicates that He is divine; so too did the Jews listening to Him understand. After the cure of the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years (a cure that took place on the Sabbath, the Sunday of the Jews), St. John remarks in verse 16 that "this is why the Jews kept persecuting Jesus, because He did such things on the Sabbath." To the interpretation of the law of the Sabbath by the Pharisees at the time of Christ, it was not lawful to carry anything. Christ had told the cured man to "take up thy pallet and walk."

When His listeners confronted Christ on this occasion, He attacks their criticism of His cure on the Sabbath by telling them that as His Father continues to work, Sabbath or not, so does He. He claims for Himself the same right to work on the Sabbath as His Father has. He indicates that His work is identical with that of His Father. "My Father works even until now, and I work." Those who heard Him caught the meaning of these words at once, and "this, then, is why the Jews were the more anxious to put him to death; because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself EQUAL TO GOD" (John 5: 17-18).

In this same Chapter 5 our Lord claims various qualities or attributes that belong to God alone. He claims for Himself the divine right to raise the dead and to give them

life. "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He will." To this claim He adds the claim to judge, a divine right. Because He has this right to judge, Christ claims for Himself the same honor that is given to the Father. "For neither does the Father judge any man, but all judgment he has given to the Son, that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him."

### "I and the Father Are One"

"I and the Father are one." St. John records these words of our Lord in chapter 10, verse 30. The sequel is significant: "The Jews therefore took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works have I shown you from my Father. For which of these works do you stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'Not for a good work do we stone thee, but for blasphemy and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.'"

Thus, a) at the most solemn moment of His life, when He was asked under oath, and when He knew that His answer would mean His death, He proclaimed that He was the Son of God. b) He accepted this title from God at the time of His baptism; by this is meant that He heard the voice, knew what was said, and did not deny it. c) He claims that He does the same work as His Father; the Jews understood Him to claim to be God. d) He claims for Himself the same right over life and death that God has.

e) He calls Himself the Son of God. f) He claims the right to judge all men. g) He claims to be one with the Father.

Texts could be multiplied; in chapter 8 of St. John's Gospel, in verse 58, our Lord uses the phrase "I am" in reference to Himself. His listeners wanted to stone Him. Why? Because in the Old Testament God had revealed His name to Moses (Exodus 3:11-14); in part the text reads: "But," said Moses to God," when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your Fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me 'What is his name?' What am I to tell them? God replied, 'I AM WHO AM . . . THIS IS WHAT YOU SHALL TELL THE ISRAELITES, I AM SENT ME TO YOU.'" Our Lord then was taking unto Himself the same name as God, and to Christ's own people that could mean only one thing. He was claiming Himself God.

### The Gospel Witness

Quick reference may be made to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, Chapters 5, 6 and 7); our Lord takes various commandments that come from God: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and then He adds: "But I say to you." He is claiming the right to interpret and to explain and to expand the very commandments that came from God. Again we may turn our attention for a moment to the confession of Peter (Matthew 16:13-20).

No one can read the four Gospels without coming to this conclusion: Jesus Christ claimed to be

the Son of God! He claimed to be one with God the Father! He claimed to be God!

But claims must be justified. Claim to divinity or to divine power or to divine honor is nothing new in the history of the world. But it is new when someone claims divinity and is justified in his claim. Jesus Christ alone is able to prove His claim. How?

Those who lived with and around our Lord could see that He was a man, but they could not see with their bodily eyes that He was God. We are in the same "boat" where our souls are concerned; no one can see them, but we know we have them. We know this because there are certain actions we perform which go beyond the powers of our bodies. Our bodies can grow and move, but they can't think, and they can't make a choice between doing good and avoiding evil. We need souls for thinking and for choosing good and avoiding evil.

Jesus Christ was a man, and He could do all a man could do. He walked, He talked, He became tired, He slept, He ate, He wept, He grew in stature, He advanced in age. But there were things that He did and said which were beyond the power of man. He walked on water; He spoke to the storm, and the winds and the seas obeyed Him. He looked into the hearts of men and knew what they were thinking. He fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, He cured all kinds of diseases with a mere word; He gave sight to a man born blind. He gave life to the dead; He foretold the future. He said that He would be

put to death and that on the third day He would rise again. He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecution of His Apostles, the kind of death St. Peter would die, the spread of His Church.

These are not the actions of a mere man. These actions demand a power beyond human power. Only God has complete control of nature. Only God is able to read the hearts of men. Only God is able to see into the future. Only God is able to give life. Are we to conclude then that our Lord is God? Emphatically, yes! Jesus backed up His claim with works that only the power of God is able to perform. As a matter of fact He appealed to these works for belief that He was divine in the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, verses 37 and 38: "If I do not perform the works of my Father, do not believe me (because I said, 'I am the Son of God'). But if I do perform them, and if you are not willing to believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

Works beyond the power of created beings we call "miracles." We are not speaking of the sense in which something may be called a "Miracle." Often people will call what they do not understand or what is beyond their own power "miraculous" or "a miracle." We are talking about those things which God alone can do, those things that demand a divine power in their performance, such as raising the dead to life, curing in a

moment and without medicine a disease, calming a storm. In a very special way prophecy or the ability to foretell the future belongs to God.

There was one miracle to which our Lord appealed as the "sign" that He was sent from heaven, and that He was what He claimed to be: the true Son of God. A miracle is a "sign" when it specifically points to the divine origin or the divine power of the one who works the miracles. We use signs to point out the way for us; our Lord used a sign to point out that He was divine. That sign (which is also a miracle) is His resurrection. In St. Matthew's Gospel (12:38-44, also Mark 8:11 f. and Luke 11:29-32) the Scribes and Pharisees approach Christ and say: "Master, we would see a sign from thee." What they wanted was a special miracle that would "sign" Christ's mission with the signature of God. A sign will be given, Christ says, and that sign is "for even as Jonas was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

When Jesus Christ came forth from the tomb, God signed and sealed His claim to be divine. If God signed His claim, then Jesus Christ must be God, the true Son of God, Divine. Then the words of the Father, spoken at the baptism of Jesus Christ and again at His Transfiguration (Matthew 3:17 and 17:5), are signed for all mankind to see and to accept: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him."

# WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD



Historically, the Catholic Church is able to trace its origin to Jesus Christ. Within ten days of His Ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, the selected followers and commissioned "officers" of Christ. He, their Master, had told these Apostles "to wait for the promise of the Father," namely, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8).

Before He ascended into heaven, Christ had gathered the Apostles around Him and He had given them their mission and their "orders." "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus directed them to go. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus drew near and spoke to them saying: 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world'" (Matthew 28:16-20).

"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" is part of the mission of the Apostles. Among the teachings that Christ had given His Apostles was: He is the Son of God, sent from heaven by His heavenly Father. This then the Apostles were to teach. The historical origin of the Catholic Church therefore is but one link in its claims to be the Church founded and established by Christ.

Another link is to be found in the doctrine that the Catholic Church teaches with regard to its Founder. It must teach what He taught about Himself. Otherwise, it cannot be the true Church of Christ, any more than an ambassador is true to his mission, if he does not transmit the true message of his superior, whether king, queen, president, or ruler.

The Catholic Church has always claimed to be Apostolic. This means that it is able to trace its history back to the Apostles and that it teaches what they handed on to their successors. We have a record of what the Apostles taught about Jesus Christ in the books of the

New Testament. We accept the fact that these books are a faithful record of the life of Jesus Christ, of the origin and growth of His Church, and of the teachings of some of the Apostles. We limit ourselves to "some of the Apostles" because only a few of the Apostles wrote these books. While we can assert that the teaching of all the Apostles is the same, yet from the factual viewpoint we have in the New Testament a record of the doctrine of Matthew, John, Paul, Peter, Jude, and James.

### Lord and Christ

Our interest is in the teaching of the Apostles, and therefore of the early Church, concerning Jesus Christ. On the very day of the coming down of the Holy Spirit the Apostles began to preach and to teach (Acts 2:4-36). It was Peter, however, who delivered the first sermon of the infant Church. What did he teach about Jesus Christ?

"Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did through him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know...God has raised him up (from the dead) . . . This Jesus, God has raised up, and we are all witnesses to it. Therefore exalted by the right hand of God, and receiving from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this Spirit which you see and hear...Therefore let all the house of Israel know most assuredly that God has made (that is, has made known, has manifested) both LORD AND CHRIST, this

Jesus whom you crucified." God the Father had openly made known to the Chosen People that Jesus Christ is both their Lord (their divine Master) and their Messiah through His Resurrection and exaltation.

"LORD AND CHRIST" were terms of special significance to Peter's Jewish audience. Christ meant to all Jews the long-awaited deliverer; Peter then is telling them that their long wait is over, for the Messiah, the Christ, has come, and he is Jesus. But this Jesus is also LORD; it is very noteworthy that the Jews used this term for God. Peter then is giving Jesus Christ a term that implied divinity to his listeners; at the same time by placing Christ at the right hand of God, he is telling his audience that Jesus has been elevated by God to a place of unique exaltation.

Between thirty and thirty-five years later this same Peter wrote two epistles. In them are found his teachings relative to Jesus Christ. In the first epistle we note the following passages. In verse two, Jesus Christ is named with the Father and the Spirit. In verse three Christ is given the title of Lord, and God is His Father (1:2-3). In the second epistle we note these phrases: "...our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:1); "...our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:11); "For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when from out of the majestic glory a voice came down to him speaking thus: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'" (1:17); "...our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (3:18).

Peter then has left us sufficient witness to his own belief and teaching concerning Jesus Christ: He is the Lord, the Christ, the Savior, the Son; He is listed on the same plane as the Father and the Spirit; He is our God.

Paul who called himself the least of the Apostles, has written more than all the others. He has left us a clear record of what he believed and taught concerning Jesus Christ, his beloved Master. The following passages from his epistle show that his doctrine concerning Christ is the same as that of St. Peter.

### By Nature God

"Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ ... who was foreordained Son of God by an act of power..." (Romans 1:1-4); "For God is my witness whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son..." (Romans 1:9); "...the Christ according to the flesh, who is, over all things, God blessed forever, amen" (Romans 9:5); "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... his beloved Son" (Ephesians 1:3-6); "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who though he was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself... And appearing in the form of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth

and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11) "... rendering thanks to the Father, who has... transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son..." "For it has pleased God the Father that in him all his fullness should dwell..." (Colossians 1:12-13, 19).

If any Apostle deserves the name of the "Apostle of the divinity of Christ" it is St. John. His gospel was written for the purpose of establishing belief in Christ, the Son of God (cf. John 20:30-31). Besides the gospel he also wrote three epistles and the Apocalypse, also called the book of Revelation. It is the teaching of most scholars today that these books of the New Testament were written later than the others, but before the end of the first century. We have then the witness of John recorded for us within seventy years of the life of our Lord, and within the first century of the life of the Church.

### True God and Eternal Life

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1-2, 14). "Thomas answered and said to him (Jesus Christ arisen from the dead): 'My Lord and my God'" (John 20:28). "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God" (I John 4:15). "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, that we may know

the true God, and may be in His Son. He is the true God and eternal life" (I John 5:20). "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end!" Apocalypse (Revelation 22:13).

John the beloved disciple, echoes over and over again the teaching that he had received from Him Who loved him so much; John is saying what Peter and Paul said and taught. If there is any difference it is that John says it more often; this is especially true if we compare his Gospel with the other three. All four Gospels teach that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35; John 20:30-31), but John's very aim in writing was to teach that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

### No Other Name

The lives of the Apostles witness to the impact that belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ made upon them. They were convinced that belief in Christ was the only way to eternal life, to the salvation of their own souls as well as the salvation of all mankind. In this belief they were echoing the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself.

At the Last Supper, in the beautiful prayer Christ uttered, are to be found these words (John 17:1-3): "Father, the hour has come! Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee, even as thou hast given him power over all flesh, in order that to all thou hast given him he may give everlasting life. Now this is everlasting life, that

they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." To accept Christ and His claim of divinity is to be united in closest unity with the Father: "Yet not for these (the Apostles) only do I pray, but for those also who through their word are to believe in me, that all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee..." (John 17:20-21). There is no such thing as indifference to Jesus Christ, for "without me you can do nothing" for your eternal welfare (cf. John 15:1-5).

### "You May Believe..."

The Apostles preached this same necessity and urgency in the acceptance of Christ's divinity and in belief in Him. John wrote his Gospel "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

The great Apostle of the Gentiles carried the name of Jesus Christ far and wide; his reason may be found in these words written to the Christians of Rome (Romans 1:16-17): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes...for in it the justice of God is revealed." Not only did he undergo perils of every kind (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-30), not only was he persecuted and put in jail and outraged in every way, but as he says to his weeping friends in Caesarea (Acts 21:7-14): "I am ready not only to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of Jesus Christ." Die he did for that name.



# Preach The Good News...

## I Am With You All Days



Records of beliefs and of teachings as well as of their historical progress are common to all men. The Church has its records. The first ones are inspired records, that is, the New Testament whose twenty-seven books testify to the life of Christ and the history of the early Church and Apostolic teaching to about 100 A.D. No one would doubt the truth of these documents, for they are vouched for by the Holy Spirit Himself. But they are also historical.

History and religion must not be separated. God has revealed Himself in and through history. Jesus Christ lived at a definite time in history; so did His apostles. They wrote at a particular date in the history of the Church as well as of the world. What they wrote concerning the beliefs and teachings of the early Church is just as historical as what they wrote about the life of Jesus Christ.

That the early Church taught Jesus Christ to be divine is as historical as the fact that He was born at Bethlehem. Because this is a religious truth does not change the fact of its being taught and being

accepted by the early Christians. There can be no doubt that the New Testament records the belief of the early Church in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. On the very day of the birth of the Church in Jerusalem, before a large crowd, St. Peter had proclaimed that through His resurrection and exalta-

tion God had proclaimed Jesus "whom you crucified" to be both "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:32-36). St. Matthew wrote very early in the history of the Church; he is recording what he and some of the other apostles taught to the Jews who became Christians. In chapter sixteen he points out that Peter in the name of all the apostles professed Jesus Christ to be the "Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

St. Paul wrote his epistles between the years 51 and 66, or certainly within 49 and 66. His epistles are filled with indications of what he taught his converts to believe concerning Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 1:4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; Philippians 2:5-11). St. John wrote towards the end of the first century. He wrote his gospel to show

that Jesus Christ was the Son of God (John 20:31).

This brief summary is sufficient to indicate that the official teachers in the early Church, the Apostles, taught that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that the early Christians accepted this doctrine. "And they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles..." (Acts 2:42).

After the death of the apostles, we no longer have inspired records of the early Church, but we do have historical records. From these records we see the exact doctrine concerning the divinity of Christ that the Church taught. These records are true records, just as are the New Testament books. True, they are not inspired, but this does not change their historicity or their truth. The only inspired books are those of the Old and New Testaments, but they are not the only true books. If men only believed inspired books as historical and as true, there could be no real history outside the Scripture. No one accepts this.

### Epistle of St. Clement

An immediate link with the inspired records of the New Testament is the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. Today it is usually referred to as the "First" because there is another epistle to the Corinthians which some claim to be from St. Clement (cf. *The Ancient Christian Writers*, No. 1, 1946, p. 4). St. Clement was Bishop of Rome and successor to St. Peter. He was in office from approximately 92 to 101, and the

date of this epistle is usually given as 96 (cf. *The Ancient Christian Writers*, No. 1, p. 3-4).

Turning page after page in this Epistle we find such expressions as "the Lord Jesus Christ" (chapter 16, 2); "our Lord Jesus Christ" (chapter 20, 11); "Jesus Christ our Lord" (chapter 49, 6); "His beloved Son Jesus Christ" (chapter 59, 2). In chapter 36 Jesus Christ is called the High Priest and the Son, as one who mirrors God's countenance. St. Paul's first chapter to the Hebrews is quoted; in this chapter St. Paul is indicating the superiority of Christ over the Angels because He is called Son whereas the Angels themselves are merely called ministering spirits.

### St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius of Antioch has left the Church a heritage of seven letters; his death by martyrdom is usually placed around 110. The holy Bishop was on his way to Rome, to his place of martyrdom, when he wrote these letters. In simple yet forceful language he writes of his beliefs, of his readiness to die for Christ, and of his own personal appreciation for all the many kindnesses shown to him on his captive journey to Rome.

Let us pick up passages pertaining to the Divinity of Christ from the pen of this ardent champion of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ our God" (Epistle to the Ephesians, Introduction); "Jesus Christ our Lord" (same Epistle, chapter 7); "Jesus Christ, His (God's) Son" (Epistle to the Magnesians, chapter 8); "Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father"

(Epistle to the Romans, Introduction); "Our God Jesus Christ" (same Epistle, chapter 3); "He (Jesus Christ) is the Son of God" (Epistle to the Smyrneans, chapter 1).

## St. Justin Martyr

As Christianity spread it was attacked on all sides. Its belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ was particularly under violent attack, and especially from scholars of the Jewish race. To refute them there arose in the Church "Apologists," the greatest of whom is St. Justin Martyr, who went to a martyr's death around 165. Of all the writings that have come down to us between 100 and 200, none are more important than those of this apologist. The best known is called "Dialogue with Trypho." This Trypho was a Jew; St. Justin in this "Dialogue" shows that Jesus Christ is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, and he justifies the belief of the Christians in Jesus Christ, not only as the Messiah, but also as God Who is to be adored (cf. Dialogue with Trypho, chapters 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 48, 55, 63).

The Church was 270 years old in 300 A.D. The teaching of the Church concerning the divinity of its Founder was as clear as the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. Yet it had not been "clear sailing" for this doctrine. Outside of the Church it met stiff opposition, as the Dialogue with Trypho indicates. In the Church itself there were to be found members who were tempted to speculate on this doctrine, and whose faith began

to waver. When St. Paul wrote to the Colossians from Rome around 63 A.D. he found it necessary to stress the nature of Christ. He insists that "He is the image of the invisible God...that in him all his (God the Father's) fullness should dwell...for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 1:15, 19; 2:9). Some time later, St. John writes that there were some who were denying that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. "He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony of God in himself. He who does not believe the Son, makes him a liar; because he does not believe the witness that God has borne concerning his son" (I John 5:10; cf. 2:22-23; 4:2-3).

Thus far, however, a major crisis had not arisen. Around 300 A.D., however, there appeared in the Church a man whose teaching on Christ's divinity soon aroused a great controversy. This man was Arius. He was a priest, who, about 300 A.D., was appointed by the bishop of Alexandria to teach the Sacred Scriptures.

Around 320 the bishop of Alexandria became aware of strange ideas concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ being taught by Arius. For Arius was saying that since Jesus Christ was the Son of God, He did not exist from all eternity; the argument of Arius stemmed from the notion of human generation, for the father exists before the son; so he said that God the Father existed before God the Son. But he went further. He denied that Jesus was the Son of God by

nature, but only by adoption; therefore He was not God at all.

Arius further taught that the Word was created out of nothing by God, that he was God's Son by adoption only (not by nature), that this Word was the creator of the world, that this Word assumed a human body, and was the instrument of the redemption of mankind.

As can be seen from this brief summary the opposition between the teaching of the Church and of Arius was this: the Church said that Jesus Christ was God, true God, equal to God the Father in nature. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not true God, but was below God the Father in nature.

Strife within the Church could only do harm, to the Church itself, and also to souls. This strife concerning Arianism grew day by day. The main harm came from the denial of a fundamental doctrine of the Church, the true divinity of Jesus Christ. Christ had died because He claimed to be the Son of God; the Church would die if it did not teach this doctrine.

In view of his famous edict that had given the Church the legal right to exist and to practice its beliefs, the Roman Emperor Constantine had indicated that he realized the peace of the empire could not be maintained as long as Christians were persecuted. There were too many of his subjects who were Christians. Now he realized that if strife continued in the Church itself, the peace of the empire would suffer, not to mention or consider for the moment what

the Church would suffer.

The Emperor realized the seriousness of the situation, hence serious action had to be taken. This serious action was the calling of a meeting of the bishops of the Church. In a letter addressed to the bishops he called them to meet in the city of Nicaea, or Nice. This meeting took place in 325, and is known as the First Ecumenical Council of the Church. An Ecumenical Council is a meeting of the bishops of the Church. The very fact that Constantine called the bishops of the Church to meet at this time indicates how seriously he viewed the necessity of the Council.

Upwards of two hundred bishops, and at times perhaps over three hundred, assembled in Nice to consider the teaching of Arius. Arius had his followers; the debate went on for some time. Finally the problem came down to this: Is Jesus Christ God as the Father was God or was He inferior to God in nature? Is He "consubstantial"—of the same nature—with the Father? The Council issued its Creed, that is known today as the Nicene Creed.

"We believe . . . in one Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only-begotten, born of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God . . . true God of the true God . . . of one substance with the Father . . ." (Denziger: *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, n. 54).

The Church had spoken; it had declared its doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, a doctrine Jesus Christ had taught, and that had been

taught by the Apostles and their successors. This formula of the Council of Nice became the standard formula for the future of the Church. In 381, the Second Ecumenical Council of the Church, known as the First Council of Constantinople, declared its Creed in words almost identical with those of the Council of Nice. The word "consubstantial" was used instead of the phrase "of the same substance" (cf. *Enchiridion*, n. 86).

### Mary, Mother of God?

Truth is one, yet there are many ways of falsifying or of denying it. If the day is sunny, there is only one way of saying the truth about the sunny day. But I can falsify or deny it in many ways, such as saying it is not sunny, or that it is foggy, or that it is cloudy, or that it only appears to be sunny, but in reality it is not! After Arius came Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, who began in the year 428 to assert that the Blessed Mother was not the Mother of God. He said that he would never accept as God an infant of two months, and that it was not God who had died, but man. Nestorius would not admit that there is but one person in Christ, the divine person of the Word. Instead he said that there were two persons, the divine person, and the human person of whom Mary was the Mother.

Once again the bishops of the Church met in the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Nicene Creed was the basis of the deliberations. Nestorius' doctrine was declared to be opposed to this Creed and hence

he was condemned. On the Incarnation the Council of Ephesus asserted that the one person of the Word united the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. The Son is Jesus Christ, and it is just and right and true to call Mary the Mother of God (*Denziger, Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 111a).

Within a few years trouble broke out again. This time it was Eutyches, a monk living near Constantinople; his heresy has come down to us under the name of the Monophysite heresy. The meaning of Monophysite is "one nature," for Eutyches taught that there was but one nature in Christ. Before the Incarnation, so he declared, there were the two natures, divine and human, but after the Incarnation, there was but one nature, and that was the divine nature.

### Council of Chalcedon

Again a Council of the Church was called, the Council of Chalcedon, in 451. Over six hundred bishops were present under the leadership of the representatives of the Pope, Leo the Great. Several years before this celebrated Pontiff had written such a clear and sublime explanation of the mysteries of Jesus Christ that those who heard what he had written, cried out that "Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo." In substance he had said that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten eternal Son of the eternal Father, who had two perfect natures, that of a true man, and that of the true God (cf. *Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 143-144).

The Council of Chalcedon proceeded to condemn the Monophysite heresy and to define the teaching of the Church concerning the two natures of Christ. In part it declared, "Following the holy Fathers we teach that Jesus Christ, one and the same Son and Lord, is perfect in deity and perfect in humanity, true God and true man... consubstantial with the Father by reason of his deity..." (Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no. 148).

A glance at the decisions of the Councils of Nice, Ephesus, and Chalcedon shows that they are teaching the same doctrine concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ. This doctrine is the same as had been taught by the Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, and the Apologists. In turn it is the same doctrine that Jesus Christ proclaimed about Himself: that he is God, the Son of God, one with God, the Word who became man. The Councils were called upon to define and to explain this doctrine because of erroneous explanations. There is a

clarification and a development of the doctrine, but there is nothing new. As an example of this, call to mind the words of Jesus Christ: "I and the Father are one," whereas the Councils speak of Him as "one in substance" or "consubstantial" with the Father.

Since 451 the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ has never been seriously attacked in the Catholic Church. Outside of the Church, however, there have been many who questioned this doctrine, many who have not been able to accept it, some who have deserted it because of rationalism, modernism, or secularism. But in the Church itself down through the centuries the teaching has not varied. The demands on the faithful to accept the doctrine have been the same as in the time of Christ Himself, as in the time of the Apostles and through the first years of the existence of the Church.

"For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"As He hung upon the Cross, Christ Jesus not only avenged the justice of the Eternal Father that had been flouted, but He also won for us, His brothers, an unending flow of graces. It was possible for Him personally, immediately to impart these graces to men; but He wished to do so only through a visible Church that would be formed by the union of men, and thus through that Church every man would perform a work of collaboration with Him in dispensing the graces of Redemption."

— *Pope Pius XII on the Mystical Body of Christ.*

# EVEN UNTO THE END OF TIME



In any society there must be those who have authority and those who are subject to that authority. The Catholic Church is a society. In it there is authority and there are members who are subject to that authority. In order to discover and find out what is taught and what is believed in the Church we should look at these two sides: the side of authority and the side of those who are under this authority. Here there is question, however, of faith, that is, of a supernatural virtue whereby the members of the Church believe what God has revealed on the authority of God revealing. We must see then what those in authority teach with regard to faith, and what the members of the Church believe in and through faith. In particular, let us see what is taught in the Catholic Church today concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ, and what the faithful accept concerning this same doctrine.

So great has been the influence of the Council of Trent (1545-63) that we cannot pass it over. As a Council it presents the solemn teaching of the Church. In the third

session, in 1546, the Council declares that the symbol of faith, to be found in the Catholic Church, is the principle and the foundation of all those who profess faith in Christ. The Council then quotes the Creed as found in the First Council of Constantinople, which in turn is drawn from the Council of Nice. In this it is clearly stated that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, consubstantial with God the Father, true God. This is accepted by all present at the Council of Trent as their own doctrine and their own belief (cf. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, no, 782).

Errors are usually the occasion for a special declaration of the true doctrine of the Church. During the reign of St. Pius X (1903-1914) this situation prevailed. The name Modernism is given to a system that denies the supernatural and anything pertaining to the supernatural. Thus Modernism holds that the Divinity of Jesus Christ as held in the Catholic Church is derived from the "Christian conscience" meditating on the Messianic dignity of Jesus Christ. Hence, Modernism claims, Jesus Christ did not

claim to be the true Son of God, but this idea came from the faith of the Christians or from the "Christian conscience."

In the decree known as "Lamentabili" issued in 1907, the Supreme Pontiff condemned these errors of Modernism. In so doing he indicated what was the true Catholic teaching concerning the Divinity of Christ. The proposition that the "doctrine of Christ as given by Paul, John, and the Councils of Nice, Ephesus, and Chalcedon is not the same as that taught by Jesus Christ..." was condemned. The true teaching of the Church is that this doctrine is the same as that taught by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taught that He was divine, equal to His Father. So has the Church taught from its beginning (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, *Symbolorum*, nos. 2027-2031).

There are samples of the official teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ. They show that the Catholic Church teaches what Christ taught of Himself, and what the Apostles, Apostolic Fathers, Apologists, and the Councils taught concerning Him: that He is the Son of God, is God.

### Cradle to Grave

"From the cradle to the grave" is an expression familiar to all. It expresses the way that faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ enters into the entire life of the Catholic and the Christian. For from the "cradle" of baptism to the "grave" of death, the Catholic has put before him this doctrine.

In Baptism, the one baptized, either himself or through sponsors, recites the Apostles' Creed and professes belief "in Jesus Christ, His (God the Father's) only Son, our Lord." A few moments before the actual baptism he is asked: "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His (God the Father's) only Son, our Lord?" In answer he proclaims to all the world that he does. After baptism he is anointed with Holy Chrism with a prayer beginning: "Omnipotent God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." At the end of the ceremony a white garment is placed on the head of the newly baptized infant and he is told to carry this garment "without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. *Ritual for Baptism*).

The Catholic believes that in the Holy Eucharist is to be found the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. He believes that when he receives Holy Communion he is receiving Jesus Christ, true God and true man. For the Catholic is taught that Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist when He said at the Last Supper: This is my body, this is my blood. It was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who said "my" body and "my" blood. The Catholic knows that he receives the whole Christ, the entire Christ, God and man. Because of this belief the Catholic genuflects when he enters any Catholic Church, for his faith tells him that his God is present in the tabernacle. He genuflects in adoration of the God-man, Jesus Christ.



When water is blessed for the Catholic's use, the ritual includes a prayer in which the water is blessed in the name of God the Father, and in the "name of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord" (cf. Ritual for Blessings).

In his daily prayers the Catholic makes frequent reference to Jesus Christ. In a prayer that is recited very often each day by millions of Catholics, the Hail Mary, these words are said: "...blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God..." Many Catholics say the Apostles' Creed daily; in it is the declaration of belief in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. The act of faith that is recited by Catholics the world over professes belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ.

When Catholics are married, it is usually at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. By this the newly married couple are professing their faith in the Son of God Who sacrificed Himself in His human nature on Calvary and Who is now renewing that sacrifice in an unbloody manner. In many marriages an exhortation or short instruction is given to the young couple before the actual ceremony. The following is found in an exhortation that is used very frequently: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son; and the Son so loved us that He gave Himself for our salvation" (cf. The Ritual for Marriage, the Priest's New Ritual, p. 208).

As the Catholic is about to leave this world he has the privilege of receiving the Last Anointing. At

the very beginning of the ceremony a prayer is directed to the Lord Jesus Christ; shortly after the intercession of the Mother of God is asked. In the last blessing given after Extreme Unction "our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God," is invoked. In the burial service the words of Jesus Christ "I am the resurrection and the life" are repeated; His infinite merits are invoked for the everlasting rest and happiness of the departed soul (cf. Ritual for Extreme Unction, and for the Burial of Adults).

From the beginning of his life to its end, the Catholic is accompanied by thoughts of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. The Church teaching and the Church believing unite to "shout from the housetops" that Jesus is the Son of God.

## Liturgy of the Church

There is no place where the teaching Church and the Church believing so unite as in the liturgy of the Church. Liturgy is the public worship of the Church. It is the Church expressing its faith through external signs and ceremonies. Liturgy is the expression of the supernatural life of the Church as well as of the supernatural faith of the Church. It is carried out by designated ministers and participated in by all the members of the Church; but of all, whether ministers or participants, there is demanded the same faith.

The center of the liturgy is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. All Catholics believe that the Mass is the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary.

All believe that it is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered through the ministry of the priest to the heavenly Father. The victim is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true God and true man. In the prayer beginning "Quam oblationem," said before the Consecration of the bread and wine, God the Father is asked to bless and to accept as well as to ratify this same bread and wine that it may become for us the body and blood of "thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." In the consecration of the wine it is stated explicitly that the blood of Christ "shall be shed for you and for all unto the remission of sins." These words are but the re-echoing of the words of Christ Himself at the Last Supper (cf. Matthew 26:27; Luke 22:20).

Immediately after the Consecration a prayer is made in which priests and people unite to offer to God "a pure Victim, a holy Victim, an immaculate Victim, the Bread of eternal life, the chalice of everlasting salvation."

In the Sacrifice of the Mass the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, are consumed by the priest. In this way he participates very closely in the Sacrifice of the Mass and receives for himself and his own sanctification the sacrificial Victim. In the liturgy of the Mass the priest prepares himself for this reception. This preparation is supplied by the prayer "Supplices te, rogamus, omnipotens Deus" (We suppliantly beseech you, Omnipotent God). In this prayer God is asked to fill with heavenly grace

and with every blessing all who shall partake "of the most sacred Body and Blood of thy Son."

But this preparation is not over. When the moment comes for the priest to consume the precious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, he bends over the altar and prays to "the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God." No priest offering the Sacrifice of the Mass could do so unless he had a strong and firm belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic who receives Holy Communion believes that he is receiving Jesus Christ, God and man, hidden under the species of the bread. For on the altar was the Body and Blood of the Son of the Living God, the Lamb of God, the divine Victim; now he receives that same Lord, that same Lamb of God, that same divine Victim.

At the end of Mass the prologue of the gospel of St. John, profound in meaning, yet simply worded, is said. In these verses the beloved disciple asserts that "in the beginning was the Word... the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh..." The Church makes its own these points of doctrine concerning Jesus Christ: He is eternal, He is God, He became man, He is the Son of the Father. In the Mass, the central act of its liturgy, it put before its members the same points of doctrine that St. John put before his readers within seventy years of the death of Jesus Christ. As it ends its sacrifice the Church wants its members to dwell upon the divinity of Him Who offered

the sacrifice and Who is the Victim of the sacrifice.

## Liturgical Cycle

In its liturgical cycle the Church relives the life of Jesus Christ. This cycle begins with Advent, the season of preparation for the coming into the world of the Word. On Christmas morning she hails the arrival of the Word made flesh; in the first of the three Masses said on this day, it opens up by reciting the words of Psalm 2: "The Lord has said to me, 'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.'" Who is born then? It is God's own son. In the second Mass the opening words taken from Isaias give various titles of the newly born Child, and among them is that of God: "...and his name shall be called Wonderful, God, Prince of Peace, Father of the world to come, whose kingdom shall have no end." The third Mass is honeycombed with references to the divinity of the Child: the Collect speaks of the only-begotten of God; in the epistle St. Paul's proof that Jesus Christ is the Son is given (cf. Hebrews 1:1 ff.); the gospel is the prologue of St. John, which we have just seen.

The next event in the liturgical cycle is the Epiphany, the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world outside of Palestine. Three events are celebrated by the Church, one of which is the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist. At this baptism the voice of God the Father is heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Together with the baptism the Church celebrates the Marriage Feast of Cana where "he manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him." His power over nature and over the creatures of nature is shown, a power that comes from His Divinity.

Lent follows the Epiphany season in the liturgical cycle; it ends with the great feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the sign He had promised, the sign that proved once and for all that He was what He claimed to be: the Son of God (cf. Romans 1:4). At the beginning of the Easter Mass the Church prays to God, Who on this day has opened the gates of heaven to us through the death of His only-begotten Son.

Easter is followed by the Ascension of our Lord. In the Mass the Church recalls that we believe the Son of God ascended to heaven on this day. Throughout the Mass there is reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, now sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

The final great feast in the liturgical cycle is Pentecost, the feast of the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, as Christ had foretold. More than that, He had sent the Holy Ghost. This is recalled in the Gospel of the Mass, where Jesus Christ is speaking as the Son of God, for He calls God His Father; He says that "...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things..." (John 14:26). Throughout the Pen-

recostal season the Holy Spirit is presented by the Church as the Spirit of Christ, as witnessing to the divinity of Jesus Christ. For example, on Friday of Ember Week during this season, the Gospel concerns the forgiveness of sin by our Lord. In this miracle He cured the man who was sick for the very purpose of proving that He had the power to forgive sin, a power, so His enemies said, that belonged to God alone.

The Church teaching, the Church believing, the Church in its sacramental life, as well as in its liturgical life; in every phase of the

Catholic Church the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ is to be found. Not only is it found, but it is the basis of the existence and the life of the Church. For should it fail to hold on to this doctrine, it would no longer know Jesus Christ as He is; it would no longer be the body of Christ, for to be His body means to be united to Him as He is, God and man. Nor would the Church be fulfilling its mission to teach what Christ taught of Himself, that He was the Son of God in the flesh. Christ's life centered around His divinity; so does the life of the Church.

“Just as, at the first moment of the Incarnation, the Son of the Eternal Father adorned with the fulness of the Holy Spirit the human nature which was substantially united with Him, that it might be a fitting instrument of the Divinity in the sanguinary task of the Redemption, so at the hour of His precious death He wished that His Church should be enriched with the abundant gifts of the Paraclete in order that, in dispensing the Divine fruits of the Redemption, the Church might be for the Incarnate Word a powerful instrument that would certainly never fail . . . Jesus Christ, hanging on the Cross, opened up to His Church the fountain of Divine graces, which protect it from ever teaching men false doctrine, and enable it to rule them for their soul's salvation through supernaturally enlightened Pastors and to bestow on them abundant heavenly graces.”

— *Pope Pius XII on the Mystical Body of Christ.*

# God The Mighty, My Lord and My God!



Sacred Scripture is made up of a number of books, different in many ways, but all brought together in Jesus Christ. From Genesis to the Apocalypse or the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is the center. The story of the Bible is the story of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament we are prepared for the coming of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is with us, in His life on earth in the Gospels, in His life in the Church in the rest of the books.

To grasp then what Jesus Christ was and what He came into the world to accomplish, we must study all of the Old Testament and the New Testament. No one passage gives us the whole story of Jesus Christ. In the study of the human body the various members must be seen in relation to the body itself. So, too, the various passages in the Bible must be seen in relation to the whole Bible.

We must remember, too, that the picture of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is a sketch, to be filled in the New Testament. A quick glance at the passage in the Old Testament will show us Jesus Christ as the descendant of Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob, Juda, and David. It will show us that he is to be a king, with divine qualities or characteristics. Thus He is called Emmanuel, that is, God with us (Isaias 7:14). He is called Mighty God, Wonderful Counsellor, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace (Isaias 9:6). He will have the spirit

of God (Isaias 11:2; 61:1). He shall be given the title "The Lord, our Just one" (Jeremias 23:6).

In the New Testament the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her son "shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father . . . the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35). When Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, was told of the origin of his foster-son, he was told to "call his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:21), in fulfillment of Isaias 7:14, "and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, interpreted, God with us." At His birth the shepherds were told by the angel that "today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord." Then they heard this

praise of God: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace* among men of good will" (Luke 2:10-14).

At the age of twelve Jesus and His parents went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. St. Luke records for us the first words from the lips of the youthful Jesus, speaking of God as His Father. "Did you not know that I must be about *my Father's* business" (Luke 2:41-50)? When Jesus began His public life one of the first scenes is that of His baptism by John the Baptist. A voice from heaven speaks to Him: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

### Son of the Living God

In two of the three temptations recorded in the desert, the devil begins "if thou art the Son of God..." (Luke 4:3, 9). Upon our Lord's return to Nazareth he entered the synagogue and read from Isaias: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me..." (Luke 4:18).

Jesus began to manifest Himself through His teaching and miracles. As He did so the people came to realize that "if this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (John 9:33). The Apostles came to realize that this was not a mere man who had called them. They came to believe as Peter said for all of them: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). So, too, did the leaders of His own people realize that He was claiming for Himself more than any one of their prophets had ever claimed for themselves. They

accused Him of claiming to be "equal to God" (cf. John 5:18), of claiming to be God (cf. John 10:33). Christ's answer to this claim was that His works indicate "that the Father is in me and I in the Father, . . . for the Father and I are one" (John 10:30, 38).

There came a time, however, when Jesus Christ proclaimed His divinity in all solemnity. He stood before the Great Council, the Sanhedrin, that had the right to judge in religious matters. Here, in answer to the question put to Him by the High Priest, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus answered "thou hast said it"; Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64). It was for this that He was put to death.

The Apostles had come to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). A clear expression of this belief is to be found on the lips of doubting Thomas. Eight days after His resurrection, when our Lord appeared to His Apostles, Thomas was absent. On this occasion, Thomas was there. Our Lord appeared and offered His hands and side for Thomas to examine. Then there burst from the heart and lips of Thomas: "My Lord and my God." "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed," so spoke Christ. He accepted the titles, for He was truly the Lord and the God of Thomas as well as of all the Apostles (John 20:26-29).

Son of God, Lord, God: these are names for Jesus Christ. To put it in another way: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He is Lord, He is God.

The people of His time knew that He claimed to be equal to God (John 5:18). He claimed the same honor that was given to God the Father (John 5:23), the same right to judge all men that belongs to God (John 5:22, 27), the same life that God the Father had (John 5:26). He went further. He said that to see Him was to see God the Father (John 14:9).

### By Nature God

Jesus Christ is by nature God. By nature God the Father is God; so, too, is the Holy Spirit by nature God. There is, however, but one God; there are not three Gods. There is but the one divine nature. Therefore He is God as is God the Father, as is God the Holy Spirit. It is because of this one divine nature that Jesus Christ could say: "The Father and I are one." They are one in nature. Hence it is as right and just to apply the name of God to Jesus Christ as it is to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. It is as right and just to adore Jesus Christ as it is the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul says that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

This is the doctrine taught by the Catholic Church. In her prayers the Catholic Church adores, thanks, asks, and begs pardon of Jesus Christ as she does of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. It is true that the Church also prays *through* Jesus Christ, for as man He

is the mediator between God and all men (cf. I Timothy 2:5). It is for this reason, too, that we read of our Lord saying that the Father is greater than He (John 14:28). Jesus Christ is true God; He is also true Man. As God He is one with God the Father.

Jesus Christ is also called the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word was made flesh" (John 1:1, 14). The Word existed with God in the beginning, that is, in the beginning of time. Genesis begins by saying, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." John is referring to this and he is telling us that the Word was with God before the creation. As God existed before creation, so did the Word. What existed before creation is eternal, for there was no time. The Word then is eternal. Jesus Christ is the Word, therefore He is eternal. But the Word is God. Jesus Christ therefore is God.

### God's Word

For the origin and meaning of the concept "word," we must look to the Old Testament. The Old Testament frequently expresses the idea of God's word. When God created, He is described as saying ...and it was done: "And God said..." When God gave the ten commandments to Moses, the phrase "and the Lord spoke all these words" is used to introduce them. Again we read: "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all his sons, and to all the children of

Israel, saying to them: 'This is the word which the Lord had commanded.'" In the prophets it is common to read expressions such as this: "The word that came to Jeremias from the Lord, saying: Stand in the gate of the house of the Lord, and proclaim there this word, and say: Hear ye the word of the Lord..."

In Psalm 118, one of the words used for the law is "word." God's law is then God's word: it is God's revelation given to the Chosen People through His word. St. Paul has summed up this thought and at the same time has shown where the Son fits into this idea at the beginning of his epistle to the Hebrews: "God who at sundry times and in divers manners *spoke* in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has *spoken* to us by his Son..." (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Son then is the Word, and the Word is God, and the Word was made flesh. Jesus Christ then is both the Word and the Son. The term "Word" is very apt to express the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son. When we think of something we express our idea in a word. At times this word is only in the mind, at other times we express the word externally; that is, we speak. God thinks of Himself; He expresses His thought of Himself in the Word, the Second Person, His Son. With us the word is separate from the idea and is different from our human nature. Our word is not another self or another person. In God, however, the Word is another person for it is a perfect expression of the thought

that the Father has of Himself. Mysterious, yes; profound, yes.

As was said, at times we speak the word in our mind. St. Paul writes that "last of all in these days (God) has *spoken* to us by His Son." God first spoke to us through the Word in the work of creation, as St. John says (1:3): "All things were made through him (the Word)." Last of all He spoke through the Word in the Incarnation: "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him" (John 1:18). The Word made flesh is the revelation of God to man, for the Word is God, and He reveals God through His life and through His teaching. Let us read what He said: "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world. They were thine and thou has given them to me, and they have kept thy *word*. Now they have learnt that whatever thou hast given me is from thee; because the *words* that thou hast given me I have given them. And they have received them (the words) and have known of a truth that I came forth from thee..." (John 17:6-8).

St. John has summed up the relation of the Word to God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Word is eternal; He is with God, that is, in the company of God the Father, yet distinct, or as we say, another person whom we call the Son, or the Second Person of the Trinity. He is God, one with the Father, consubstantial with the Father. This Word became flesh;



therefore Jesus Christ who is this Word made flesh is God; He is eternal; He is the Son, the Second Person of the adorable Trinity.

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). One Lord: one God, the God of Israel! This is fundamental to the revelation made by God to the Chosen People. The exclusive unity of God was the first doctrine of the covenant between God and His People.

When Jesus Christ claimed to be God, it would seem that this claim attacked the very basis of the Jewish religion. But strong as was their monotheism, the Jews could not overlook certain passages in the Old Testament in which the divine name was given to others. In what is called the Book of Emmanuel (chapters 7 to 12), Isaias is speaking of a child who "is born to us," and of a son who "is given to us." In chapter 7 he writes that "his name shall be called Emmanuel," that is, God with us. And in chapter 9 he adds that "his name shall be called . . . Mighty God."

As the name, God, is applied to the Father, so is it applied to the Son. But Jesus Christ is the Son; therefore He is God. Hence our Lord could say as He did: "I and the Father are one." There is but one God, as we have already said. Even though "God" is applied to both the Father and the Son, there is but one God. Both the Father and the Son are divine, both have the divine nature, both are eternal, omnipotent, infinite. In all of these things they are one. Yet they are distinct, for God the Father is the

First Person, and God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Hence Jesus could say: "I and the Father," that is, two persons, "are one," that is, one in nature.

Jesus Christ therefore is one with the Father because together with His human nature He has the divine nature; He is distinct from the Father because He is the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. There is only one "I" in Jesus Christ; that "I" is a divine person. But there are two natures in Him, the divine nature and the human nature. In us wherever there is a human nature, there is an "I", one person; but in Jesus Christ there are two natures, yet only one "I" or person, and that is the divine person of the Son.

### Jesus Christ Is God

All of this is very profound; it is mysterious. Yet those who wish to appreciate and understand Jesus Christ must know Who He is, what He is, and what He means to them. We have seen Who He is, and what He is. Now let us reflect on what He means to the human race.

Jesus Christ is God, our Creator, our Maker, our beginning and end. We came from Him and we must go to Him; He has destined us for an eternal life with Himself. We must pay Him homage, honor, adoration, obedience. Since Jesus Christ is God, all of this belongs to Him as much as to the Father. So in the Apocalypse, St. John "beheld and I heard a voice of many angels around about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them were thousands

and thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and glory and blessing... To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever' (Apocalypse 5:11-13).

## True God, True Man

This is the worship that the Catholic Church gives to Jesus Christ. It prays to Him as it does to God the Father. It gives to Him the same adoration that it gives to God the Father. Since there is but one God, any honor paid to God the Son (or God the Holy Ghost) is paid to God the Father; to honor one person is to honor all three, for the three persons are one God.

Yet we find Jesus Christ praying to God as creatures pray to Him: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." "I pray for them... Yet not for these only do I pray..." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He goes so far as to tell the Apostles that "if you loved me, you would indeed rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is *greater* than I" (John 14:29). Jesus Christ as a human being is not as great as the Father, even though, as divine, He is equal to Him.

St. Paul who wrote of Jesus Christ "who though he was by nature God," also wrote: "For there is one God, and one Mediator, between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). He

also said that Jesus Christ as high priest "is able at all times to save those who come to God through Him, since he lives always to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). He added: "For Jesus, in the days of his earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to him who was able to save him from death, and was heard because of his reverent submission. And he, Son though he was, learned obedience from the things that he suffered..." (Hebrews 5:7-8).

It is the same with the Church. The Church honors Him as the Son of the living God, true God, consubstantial with the Father, infinite, eternal, omnipotent. Yet the Church prays through Him; "through Jesus Christ our Lord," "through Christ our Lord," "we beseech, O God, through the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Such phrases are constantly on the lips and in the hearts of the Church praying. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the one offering is the High Priest, Jesus Christ, and the Victim offered to God the Father is Jesus Christ.

It is through Jesus Christ that God is revealed to man. Eternal life, the destiny of all men, comes to us through Jesus Christ because He has redeemed us through His blood. He Himself said: "Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). There is no other way to eternal life, for "I am the way," says Jesus Christ.

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