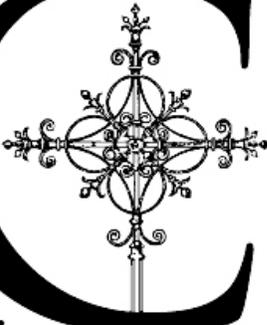


# RCIA



## Christian Formation Process

For God So Loved the World:  
The Incarnation and Crucifixion

### Who is Jesus Christ?

Mark 8:27-30.

<sup>27</sup> And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the villages of Caesare's Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" <sup>28</sup> And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Eli'jah; and others one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." <sup>30</sup> And he charged them to tell no one about him.

### The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God; <sup>3</sup> all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, <sup>[b]</sup> and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, <sup>[c]</sup> and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

<sup>11</sup> He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only Son, <sup>[d]</sup> who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

## **The First Disciples of Jesus**

John 1:35-42

<sup>35</sup> The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; <sup>36</sup> and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). <sup>42</sup> He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter<sup>[f]</sup>).

## **The Theology of Christ:**

### **The Necessity of the Incarnation**

As the sin of Adam and Eve offended the infinite dignity of God, the satisfaction due to God in atonement needed to be of infinite value. However, no mere creature could make such a satisfaction since no creature, however holy or exalted, could offer more than a finite reparation. There was a necessity, therefore, for the Redeemer to be both God and man — man, that he might suffer and die on our behalf; God, that an infinite merit might attach to His atonement. Such a Redeemer was sent by God — Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2, 5).

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (Gal. 4, 4-5). God the Son became the man Jesus Christ: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (St. John 1, 14). The word "*incarnation*" is derived from the Latin, meaning, "to put on flesh."

Christ could not have become Redeemer of humanity without a human nature, for it was His assumed human nature that was the instrumental cause of our salvation. In therefore voluntarily giving her flesh to the Son of God the Virgin Mary in the most intimate way co-operated to bring into effect God's plan of redemption, hence her title of "*Co-Redemptrix*."

### **True God and True Man**

Jesus Christ is not only truly God, begotten of the Father in all eternity, but also truly man from the time He was conceived in His Mother's womb: "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2, 6-7). Thus, Christ has a divine and human nature united in His one Person — this union is called the *Hypostatic Union*, "hypostatic" meaning person in Greek. This union will never be dissolved, and remains so today. When Our Lord's body lay in the Sepulcher, the Person of the Word still remained united to it, just as it remained united to His soul in Abraham's Bosom (1 Pet. 3, 19).

As Christ has a divine and human nature, so also has He a divine and human will. Yet His human will is ever in perfect accord with His divine will: "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (St. Matt. 26, 39). Likewise, Christ possesses both a divine and human intellect. In His divine intellect Christ possesses comprehensive knowledge of all things past, present and future, as well as the infinite array of possibilities. In His human intellect Christ possesses infused knowledge of all things past, present and future by virtue of the Hypostatic Union, as well as acquired, or experimental knowledge through His external senses.

Being the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God: "thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" (Heb. 1, 5). For many, the thought that God can have a Son who has the same nature as Himself is anathema. Yet, Christ is not a separate God, but a distinct Person, God's image of Himself: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation" (Col. 1, 15). Jesus Christ is the only Son of God by nature, whereas we become through Christ the sons of God by adoption: "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8, 15). This adoption formerly begins with baptism, which infuses into our souls the indelible mark of a Christian, or *character*, and incorporates us into Christ's Body, the Church.

### **Jesus is the Savior of All**

The name "Jesus Christ" means "Anointed Savior." Our Lord's name is one of power and confidence, and should invoke our deepest respect. It has always been part of Catholic piety to reverence the name of Jesus with at least a slight bow of the head when hearing it pronounced: "God also highly exalted him and gave him

the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2, 9-11).

Romans 5: 1-21

### **Results of Justification**

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have obtained access[b] to this grace in which we stand, and we[c] rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 More than that, we[d] rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. 8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.

### **Adam and Christ**

12 Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned[e]— 13 sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.[f] 16 And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. 19 For as by one

man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. 20 Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **How Jesus' Death Saves Us**

- 1. Jesus' death is a ransom to save sinners.**
- 2. Jesus' death is an atonement or satisfaction for our sins.**
- 3. Jesus serves as a "penal substitute" for us.**
- 4. Jesus' death is a sacrifice to expiate our sins.**

### **He descended into Hell**

636 By the expression "He descended into hell", the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil "who has the power of death" ( $\Rightarrow$  Heb 2:14).

637 In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.

### **The Resurrection: A Historical and Transcendent Event**

#### **The Historical Event**

The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. . ." The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus. CCC 639

Evidence for the Resurrection:

1. An empty tomb
2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene
3. Jesus appears on the Road
4. Jesus visits Peter and the disciples

#### **The Transcendent Event**

O truly blessed Night, sings the Exsultet of the Easter Vigil, which alone deserved to know the time and the hour when Christ rose from the realm of the dead! But no one was an eyewitness to Christ's Resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost

essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was an historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb and by the reality of the apostles' encounters with the risen Christ, still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history. This is why the risen Christ does not reveal himself to the world, but to his disciples, "to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people." CCC 647

### **He ascended into Heaven:**

665 Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf [⇒ Acts 1:11](#)); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf [⇒ Col 3:3](#)).

666 Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.

667 Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **He will come again to judge the living and the dead:**

680 Christ the Lord already reigns through the Church, but all the things of this world are not yet subjected to him. the triumph of Christ's kingdom will not come about without one last assault by the powers of evil.

681 On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history.

682 When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace

### **Prophet, Priest and King: Christ in our daily lives**

Jesus Christ has the threefold character of *Priest*, *Prophet* and *King*. He is a priest in once having offered Himself on Calvary for the redemption of the world, and continuing to offer Himself daily in the Mass: "Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5, 6); He is a Prophet by being a teacher of truth, revealing the mysteries of God and foretelling of things to come: "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you" (Acts 3, 22); He is King because He came down to earth to establish His Church, a spiritual kingdom over which He shall rule for all eternity: "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19, 16).

## **Christ the Prophet:**

The way of discipleship: We are called to follow Christ's example on Earth.

## **Becoming the Mustard Seed**

Matthew 13:31-32

<sup>31</sup> Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup> it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

## **Jesus teaches us how to live**

### **The Beatitudes**

Matthew 5:1-11

<sup>5</sup> Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## **Christ the Priest:**

"Let us stretch out ourselves, going beyond our comfort zones to unite ourselves with Christ's redemptive work. We unite ourselves with Christ's redemptive work when we make peace, when we share the good news that God is in our lives, when we reflect to our brothers and sisters God's healing, God's forgiveness, God's unconditional love. Let us break bread together. Let us relive the holy and redemptive mystery. Let us do it in memory of him, acknowledging in faith his real presence on our altars."

-Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA *Mississippi Today* (April 1990)

## **Christ the King:**

Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the "King of Glory," respectful silence in the presence of the "ever greater" God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications.

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2628

#### **Final Thought for Mediation:**

**The Word became flesh to save us from sin and reconcile us to God. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)**

**By the Incarnation we are made aware of the depth of God's love for us. "in this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him." (1 John 4:9)**

**When the Son of God became man he became a model of holiness for us. "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you." (John 15:12).**

**God became man that we may partake in the divine nature. "He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4)**

#### **Closing Prayer:**

Now that we have seen the resurrection of Christ,  
Let us adore the all-holy Lord Jesus, the only Sinless One.  
We bow in worship before your cross, O Christ,  
And we praise and glorify your resurrection,  
For You are God, and we have no other,  
And we magnify your name.  
All you faithful, come: let us adore the holy resurrection of Christ,  
For behold, through the cross joy has come to the world!  
Let us always bless the Lord, let us sing his resurrection,  
For by enduring for us the pain of the cross, He has crushed death by his death.

-Hymn from Easter Sunday, Byzantine Daily Worship