

Incarnation

Bible Study at a Glance:

God assumed human nature, became man, in order to save us and make us sharers in his divinity. He alone could do this in order to make us adopted sons and daughters of God. He raises our dignity immensely by making us worthy to share in his divine nature.

CCC 464: The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

(Explain to the Group) = You don't have to read this word for word, but this is the general idea of what to explain before moving on.

- **Q: These are questions to ask the whole group**
 - *A: Hopefully the group arrives at most of the answers on their own, but if they don't, redirect the discussion towards these answers, and be sure to tell the group the answers if no one quite got it.*

CCC/Verses and quotes to read out loud are in boxes.

CCC 469: The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother: "

CCC 461: Taking up St. John's expression, "The Word became flesh", The Church calls "Incarnation" the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 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. and being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross

CCC 470: Because "human nature was assumed, not absorbed", in the mysterious union of the Incarnation, the Church was led over the course of centuries to confess the full reality of Christ's human soul, with its operations of intellect and will, and of his human body. In parallel fashion, she had to recall on each occasion

that Christ's human nature belongs, as his own, to the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it. Everything that Christ is and does in this nature derives from "one of the Trinity".

The Son of God therefore communicates to his humanity his own personal mode of existence in the Trinity. In his soul as in his body, Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity:

The Son of God. . . worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.

CCC 521: *Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man." We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model ...*

CCC 460: *The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature": "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."*

(Explain to the Group) To summarize what we believe about the Incarnation, we believe:

- God became man by *assuming*, or taking on, human nature, and experiencing everything we experience as humans, except sin
- Jesus is fully God and fully man, both entirely true
- He is not part God and part man

- **Q: Why did he do that (the Incarnation)? Why did he assume human nature?**
 - A:
 - *To save us (see CCC 461)*
 - *To communicate himself to us (see CCC 470)*
 - *To make us sharers in his divinity, sons of God (see CCC 460)*
 - *Remembering that God is love, and the Holy Trinity is an eternal relationship of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ's Incarnation is intended to save us and elevate us to become sharers in that eternal relationship of love.*

- **Q: Why couldn't he have sent an angel or a prophet to save us?**
 - *A: Only God/Christ could do this himself because he planned to rebirth us into his divine nature. We cannot become sons of an angel, and even if we could, we would not then be sons of God. God had much higher purposes for us, to make us one with HIM. The whole point is the divine came down to divinize us, that is to unite us to his divine nature. He unites us to him through Baptism.*

- **Q: Could he have done it any other way?**
 - *A: Yes, but he wanted to show us how much he loved us. He could have avoided taking on flesh at all or chosen a much less barbaric execution. But he chose this way because the lengths he was willing to go through communicate volumes to us of how much he loves us.*

- **Q: Why weren't the prophets and the law in the Old Testament enough to communicate himself to us?**
 - *A: Think of someone you love. You can read about them or you can have someone tell you all about them, or pass you messages from them, but you won't ever know them quite like knowing them in person. This is partly what God accomplished in his Incarnation; he allowed us to see him and interact with him face-to-face.*

- **Q: God could have come as a landowner, synagogue official, or some other position of status. But he didn't. Why do you think that is?**
 - *A: God is humble. It took immense humility to become man in the first place, and beyond that:*
 - *To be born in a manger, not even a proper building*
 - *To grow up poor*
 - *To allow himself to be insulted and persecuted by mere humans that he created*
 - *To die the death of a slave - crucifixion, whereas if he was a Roman citizen, it would have been beheading*
 - *So that we can know he took on the hardest things in our humanity. He went about as low as you can go to pull all of us up.*

- **Q: What does God's intention in the Incarnation say about how he sees you?**