

Virgin Birth

Bible Study at a Glance:

Christ came into the world through a miraculous birth to a virgin. In the same way, we are given rebirth through our mother, the Church, into a divine life by the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit.

Following in Christ's footsteps, we live life on this earth, suffer, and die, but rise again to eternal divine life with him.

John 3:3-6: *Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."*⁴

*Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?"*⁵ *Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."*⁶ *What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit.*

CCC 505: *By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in the new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith. "How can this be?" Participation in the divine life arises "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God". The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man.*

(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.

- **Q: What do you think is meant by "the acceptance of this life is virginal" in CCC 505?**
 - *A: It means the acceptance of divine life, i.e., our salvation, is entirely God's gift to us, not something we can earn. In the same way as Mary miraculously conceives, so do we miraculously receive the Holy Spirit and are born again as Jesus was describing to Nicodemus (i.e., the new birth) as a result.*
- **Q: How is it that we become born again? (Hint: It's a sacrament).**
 - *A: Through Baptism.*

- **Q: In practice, do we in fact see “the acceptance of this life is virginal”? Or are we tempted to think we earn or deserve it?**
 - *A: It is “entirely the Spirit’s gift to man” (see CCC 505). This is partly why the Church baptizes babies who can do nothing to earn the gift of divine life. Good works are required of us to conform ourselves to Christ on an ongoing basis, but we can do nothing to merit the initial gift of life given to us by the Holy Spirit. (See CCC 2010).*

CCC 1683: *The Church who, as Mother, has borne the Christian sacramentally in her womb during his earthly pilgrimage, accompanies him at his journey's end, in order to surrender him "into the Father's hands." She offers to the Father, in Christ, the child of his grace, and she commits to the earth, in hope, the seed of the body that will rise in glory. This offering is fully celebrated in the Eucharistic sacrifice; the blessings before and after Mass are sacramentals.*

- **Q: What parallels do you see between your own “rebirth” and Christ’s birth?**
 - *A:*
 - *Our rebirth is miraculous, like Christ’s*
 - *Our mother, the Church, gives birth to us, as Mary, the beginning of the Church gave birth to Christ*

- **Q: Mary said “yes” to the angel. What if we said no to the Holy Spirit, to being born again? Is that even possible, and what would it look like?**
 - *A: It is possible and people reject God all the time. Unrepented mortal sin is a good example of saying no to God. Our “yes” to God is a lifelong yes, every day choosing to surrender ourselves to him as Mary did.*

- **Q: If Christ’s life and miraculous birth is our model for our life and miraculous rebirth, what does it say about the rest of our lives? What can we expect of life on earth by looking at Christ’s earthly life?**
 - *A:*
 - *Our life on this earth will be hard, filled with suffering, like Christ’s*
 - *We will die an earthly death, as Christ did*

- *Our bodies will be raised from the dead, as Christ's was. This is the culmination of our rebirth, of why Christ came into the world, that he would raise us up to a new creation, to eternal life with him, united to him forever!*