

US CATECHISM FOR ADULTS

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COMPENDIUM

CHAPTER TWO

I Believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God

79. What is the Good News for humanity?

422-424

It is the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the “Son of the living God” (*Matthew* 16:16), who died and rose from the dead. In the time of King Herod and the Emperor Caesar Augustus, God fulfilled the promises that he made to Abraham and his descendants. He sent “his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (*Galatians* 4:4-5).

80. How is the Good News spread?

425-429

From the very beginning the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Jesus Christ in order to lead all to faith in him. Even today, from the loving knowledge of Christ there springs up in the believer the desire to evangelize and catechize, that is, to reveal in the Person of Christ the entire design of God and to put humanity in communion with him.

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord”

81. What is the meaning of the name “Jesus”?

430-435

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Given by the angel at the time of the Annunciation, the name “Jesus” means “God saves”. The name expresses his identity and his mission “because he will save his people from their sins” (*Matthew* 1:21). Peter proclaimed that “there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved” (*Acts* 4:12).

82. Why is Jesus called “Christ”?

436-440
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“Christ” in Greek, “Messiah” in Hebrew, means the “anointed one”. Jesus is the Christ because he is consecrated by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit for his redeeming mission. He is the Messiah awaited by Israel, sent into the world by the Father. Jesus accepted the title of Messiah but he made the meaning of the term clear: “come down from heaven” (*John 3:13*), crucified and then risen, he is the Suffering Servant “who gives his life as a ransom for the many” (*Matthew 20:28*). From the name Christ comes our name of *Christian*.

83. In what sense is Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God?

441-445
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Jesus is the Son of God in a unique and perfect way. At the time of his Baptism and his Transfiguration, the voice of the Father designated Jesus as his “beloved Son”. In presenting himself as the Son who “knows the Father” (*Matthew 11:27*), Jesus affirmed his singular and eternal relationship with God his Father. He is “the Only Begotten Son of God” (*1 John 4:9*), the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the central figure of apostolic preaching. The apostles saw “his glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father” (*John 1:14*).

84. What is the meaning of the title “Lord”?

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In the Bible this title regularly designates God as Sovereign. Jesus ascribed this title to himself and revealed his divine sovereignty by his power over nature, over demons, over sin, and over death, above all by his own Resurrection. The first Christian creeds proclaimed that the power, the honor, and the glory that are due to God the Father also belong to Jesus: God “has given him the name which is above every other name” (*Philippians 2:9*). He is the Lord of the world and of history, the only One to whom we must completely submit our personal freedom.

*“Jesus Christ was conceived by the power
of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary”*

85. Why did the Son of God become man?

456-460

For us men and for our salvation, the Son of God became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He did so to reconcile us sinners with God, to have us learn of God’s infinite love, to be our model of holiness and to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (*2 Peter 1:4*).

86. What does the word “Incarnation” mean?

461-463

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The Church calls the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one divine Person of the Word the “Incarnation”. To bring about our salvation the Son of God was made “flesh” (*John* 1:14) and became truly man. Faith in the Incarnation is a distinctive sign of the Christian faith.

87. In what way is Jesus Christ true God and true man?

464-467

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Jesus is inseparably true God and true man in the unity of his divine Person. As the Son of God, who is “begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father,” he was made true man, our brother, without ceasing to be God, our Lord.

88. What does the Council of Chalcedon (in the year 451) teach in this regard?

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The Council of Chalcedon teaches us to confess “one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in his humanity, true God and true man, composed of rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father by his divinity, and consubstantial with us by his humanity, ‘like us in all things but sin’ (*Hebrews* 4:15), begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity, and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary, the Virgin and Mother of God, as to his humanity.”

89. How does the Church set forth the Mystery of the Incarnation?

464-470

479-481

The Church confesses that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature, not confused with each other but united in the Person of the Word. Therefore, in the humanity of Jesus all things - his miracles, his suffering, and his death - must be attributed to his divine Person which acts by means of his assumed human nature.

“O Only-begotten Son and Word of God you who are immortal, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary (...) You who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!” (Byzantine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom)

90. Did the incarnate Son of God have a soul with human knowledge?

470-474
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The Son of God assumed a body animated by a rational human soul. With his human intellect Jesus learned many things by way of experience; but also as man the Son of God had an intimate and immediate knowledge of God his Father. He likewise understood people's secret thoughts and he knew fully the eternal plans which he had come to reveal.

91. How did the two wills of the incarnate Word cooperate?

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Jesus had a divine will and a human will. In his earthly life the Son of God humanly willed all that he had divinely decided with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation. The human will of Christ followed without opposition or reluctance the divine will or, in other words, it was subject to it.

92. Did Christ have a true human body?

476-477

Christ assumed a true human body by means of which the invisible God became visible. This is the reason why Christ can be represented and venerated in sacred images.

93. What does the heart of Jesus exemplify?

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Jesus knew us and loved us with a human heart. His Heart, pierced for our salvation, is the symbol of that infinite love with which he loves the Father and each one of us.

CATECHISM OF TARENT

ARTICLE II : "AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD"

Advantages Of Faith In This Article

That wonderful and superabundant are the blessings which flow to the human race from the belief and profession of this Article we learn from these words of St. John: Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God; and also from the words of Christ the Lord, proclaiming the Prince of the Apostles blessed for the confession of this truth:

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. For this Article is the most firm basis of our salvation and redemption.

But as the fruit of these admirable blessings is best known by considering the ruin brought on man by his fall from that most happy state in which God had placed our first parents, let the pastor be particularly careful to make known to the faithful the cause of this common misery and calamity.

When Adam had departed from the obedience due to God and had violated the prohibition, of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat, for in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death, he fell into the extreme misery of losing the sanctity and righteousness in which he had been placed, and of becoming subject to all those other evils which have been explained more fully by the holy Council of Trent.

Wherefore, the pastor should not omit to remind the faithful that the guilt and punishment of original sin were not confined to Adam, but justly descended from him, as from their source and cause, to all posterity. The human race, having fallen from its elevated dignity, no power of men or Angels could raise it from its fallen condition and replace it in its primitive state. To remedy the evil and repair the loss it became necessary that the Son of God, whose power is infinite, clothed in the weakness of our flesh, should remove the infinite weight of sin and reconcile us to God in His blood.

Necessity Of Faith In This Article

The belief and profession of this our redemption, which God declared from the beginning, are now, and always have been, necessary to salvation. In the sentence of condemnation pronounced against the human race immediately after the sin of Adam the hope of redemption was held out in these words, which announced to the devil the loss he was to sustain by man's redemption: I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.

The same promise God again often confirmed and more distinctly manifested to those chiefly whom He desired to make special objects of His favour; among others to the Patriarch Abraham, to whom He often declared this mystery, but more explicitly when, in obedience to His command, Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Because, said God, thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake; I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore. Thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice. From these words it was easy to infer that He who was to deliver mankind from the ruthless tyranny of Satan was to be descended from Abraham; and that while He was the Son of God, He was to be born of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.

Not long after, to preserve the memory of this promise, God renewed the same covenant with Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. When in a vision Jacob saw a ladder standing on earth, and its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending by it, as the Scriptures testify, he also heard the Lord, who was leaning on the ladder, say to him: I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land, wherein thou sleepest, I will give to thee and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. Thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Nor did God cease afterwards to excite in the posterity of Abraham and in many others, the expectation of a Saviour, by renewing the recollection of the same promise; for after the establishment of the Jewish State and religion it became better known to His people. Types signified and men foretold what and how great blessings the Saviour and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, was to bring to mankind. And indeed the Prophets, whose minds were illuminated with light from above, foretold the birth of the Son of God, the wondrous works which He wrought while on earth, His doctrine, character, life, death, Resurrection, and the other mysterious circumstances regarding Him, and all these they announced to the people as graphically as if they were passing before their eyes. With the exception that one has reference to the future and the other to the past, we can discover no difference between the predictions of the Prophets and the preaching of the Apostles, between the faith of the ancient Patriarchs and that of Christians.

But we are now to speak of the several parts of this Article.

"Jesus"

Jesus is the proper name of the God-man and signifies Saviour: a name given Him not accidentally, or by the judgment or will of man, but by the counsel and command of God. For the Angel announced to Mary His mother: Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He afterwards not only commanded Joseph, who was espoused to the Virgin, to call the child by that name, but also declared the reason why He should be so called. Joseph, son of David, said the Angel, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.

In the Sacred Scriptures we meet with many who were called by this name. So, for example, was called the son of Nave, who succeeded Moses, and, by special privilege denied to Moses, conducted into the land of promise the people whom Moses had delivered from Egypt; and also the son of Josedech, the priest. But how much more appropriate it is to call by this name our Saviour, who gave light, liberty and salvation, not to one people only, but to all men, of all ages to men oppressed, not by famine, or Egyptian or Babylonian bondage, but sitting in the shadow of death and fettered by the galling chains of sin and of the devil who purchased for them a right to the inheritance of heaven and reconciled them to God the Father! In those men who were designated by the same name we see foreshadowed Christ the Lord, by whom the blessings just enumerated were poured out on the human race.

All other names which according to prophecy were to be given by divine appointment to the Son of God, are comprised in this one name Jesus; for while they partially signified the salvation which He was to bestow upon us, this name included the force and meaning of all human salvation.

"Christ"

To the name Jesus is added that of Christ, which signifies the anointed. This name is expressive of honour and office, and is not peculiar to one thing only, but common to many; for in the Old Law priests and kings, whom God, on account of the dignity of their office, commanded to be anointed, were called christs. For priests commend the people to God by unceasing prayer, offer sacrifice to Him, and turn away His wrath from mankind. Kings are entrusted with the government of the people; and to them principally belong the authority of the law, the protection of innocence and the punishment of guilt. As, therefore, both these functions seem to represent the majesty of

God on earth, those who were appointed to the royal or sacerdotal office were anointed with oil. Furthermore, since Prophets, as the interpreters and ambassadors of the immortal God, have unfolded to us the secrets of heaven and by salutary precepts and the prediction of future events have exhorted to amendment of life, it was customary to anoint them also.

When Jesus Christ our Saviour came into the world, He assumed these three characters of Prophet, Priest and King, and was therefore called Christ, having been anointed for the discharge of these functions, not by mortal hand or with earthly ointment, but by the power of His heavenly Father and with a spiritual oil; for the plenitude of the Holy Spirit and a more copious effusion of all gifts than any other created being is capable of receiving were poured into His soul. This the Prophet clearly indicates when he addresses the Redeemer in these words: Thou hast loved justice, and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. The same is also more explicitly declared by the Prophet Isaias: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach to the meek.

Jesus Christ, therefore, was the great Prophet and Teacher, from whom we have learned the will of God and by whom the world has been taught the knowledge of the heavenly Father. The name prophet belongs to Him preeminently, because all others who were dignified with that name were His disciples, sent principally to announce the coming of that Prophet who was to save all men.

Christ was also a Priest, not indeed of the same order as were the priests of the tribe of Levi in the Old Law, but of that of which the Prophet David sang: Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech. This subject the Apostle fully and accurately develops in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Christ not only as God, but also as man and partaker of our nature, we acknowledge to be a King. Of Him the Angel testified: He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. This kingdom of Christ is spiritual and eternal, begun on earth but perfected in heaven. He discharges by His admirable Providence the duties of King towards His Church, governing and protecting her against the assaults and snares of her enemies, legislating for her and imparting to her not only holiness and righteousness, but also the power and strength to persevere. But although the good and the bad are found within the limits of this kingdom, and thus all men by right belong to it, yet those who in conformity with His commands lead unsullied and innocent lives, experience beyond all others the sovereign goodness and beneficence of our King. Although descended from the most illustrious race of kings, He obtained this kingdom not by hereditary or other human right, but because God bestowed on Him as man all the power, dignity and majesty of which human nature is capable. To Him, therefore, God delivered the government of the whole world, and to this His sovereignty, which has already commenced, all things shall be made fully and entirely subject on the day of judgment.

"His Only Son"

In these words, mysteries more exalted with regard to Jesus are proposed to the faithful as objects of their belief and contemplation; namely, that He is the Son of God, and true God, like the Father who begot Him from eternity. We also confess that He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Ghost; for in the Divine Persons nothing unequal or unlike should exist, or even be imagined to exist, since we acknowledge the essence, will and power of all to be one. This truth is both clearly revealed in many passages of Holy Scripture and sublimely announced in the testimony of St. John: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

But when we are told that Jesus is the Son of God, we are not to understand anything earthly or mortal in His birth; but are firmly to believe and piously to adore that birth by which, from all eternity, the Father begot the Son, a mystery which reason cannot fully conceive or comprehend, and at the contemplation of which, overwhelmed, as it were, with admiration, we should exclaim with the Prophet: Who shall declare his generation? On this point, then, we are to believe that the Son is of the same nature, of the same power and wisdom, with the Father, as we more fully profess in these words of the Nicene Creed: And in one Lord Jesus Christ, his Only-begotten Son, born of the Father before all ages, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made.

Among the different comparisons employed to elucidate the mode and manner of this eternal generation that which is borrowed from the production of thought in our mind seems to come nearest to its illustration, and hence St. John calls the Son the Word. For as our mind, in some sort understanding itself, forms an image of itself, which theologians express by the term word, so God, as far as we may compare human things to divine, understanding Himself, begets the eternal Word. It is better, however, to contemplate what faith proposes, and in the sincerity of our souls to believe and confess that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, as God, begotten of the Father before all ages, as Man, born in time of Mary, His Virgin Mother.

While we thus acknowledge His twofold Nativity; we believe Him to be one Son, because His divine and human natures meet in one Person. As to His divine generation He has no brethren or coheirs, being the Only-begotten Son of the Father, while we mortals are the work of His hands. But if we consider His birth as man, He not only calls many by the name of brethren, but treats them as such, since He admits them to share with Him the glory of His paternal inheritance. They are those who by faith have received Christ the Lord, and who really, and by works of charity, show forth the faith which they profess in words. Hence the Apostle calls Christ, the first-born amongst many brethren.

"Our Lord"

Of our Saviour many things are recorded in Sacred Scripture. Some of these, it is evident, apply to Him as God and some as man, because from His two natures He received the different properties which belong to both. Hence we say with truth that Christ is Almighty, Eternal, Infinite, and these attributes He has from His Divine Nature; again, we say of Him that He suffered, died, and rose again, which are properties manifestly that belong to His human nature.

Besides these terms, there are others common to both natures; as when in this Article of the Creed we say our Lord. If, then, this name applies to both natures, rightly is He to be called our Lord. For as He, as well as the Father, is the eternal God, so is He Lord of all things equally with the Father; and as He and the Father are not the one, one God, and the other, another God, but one and the same God, so likewise He and the Father are not the one, one Lord, and the other, another Lord.

As man, He is also for many reasons appropriately called our Lord. First, because He is our Redeemer, who delivered us from sin, He deservedly acquired the power by which He truly is and is called our Lord. This is the doctrine of the Apostle:

He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus

Christ is in the glory of God the Father. And of Himself He said, after His Resurrection: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

He is also called Lord because in one Person both natures, the human and the divine, are united; and even though He had not died for us, He would have yet deserved, by this admirable union, to be constituted common Lord of all created things, particularly of the faithful who obey and serve Him with all the fervour of their souls.

Duties Owed To Christ Our Lord

It remains, therefore, that the pastor remind the faithful that: from Christ we take our name and are called Christians; that we cannot be ignorant of the extent of His favours, particularly since by His gift of faith we are enabled to understand all these things. We, above all others, are under the obligation of devoting and consecrating ourselves forever, like faithful servants, to our Redeemer and our Lord.

This indeed, we promised at the doors of the church when about to be baptised; for we then declared that we renounced the devil and the world, and gave ourselves unreservedly to Jesus Christ. But if to be enrolled as soldiers of Christ we consecrated ourselves by so holy and solemn a profession to our Lord, what punishments should we not deserve if after our entrance into the Church, and after having known the will and laws of God and received the grace of the Sacraments, we were to form our lives upon the precepts and maxims of the world and the devil, just as though when cleansed in the waters of Baptism, we had pledged our fidelity to the world and to the devil, and not to Christ the Lord and Saviour!

What heart so cold as not to be inflamed with love by the kindness and good will exercised toward us by so great a Lord, who, though holding us in His power and dominion as slaves ransomed by His blood, yet embraces us with such ardent love as to call us not servants, but friends and brethren? This, assuredly, supplies the most just, and perhaps the strongest, claim to induce us always to acknowledge, venerate, and adore Him as our Lord.

ARTICLE III : "WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Importance Of This Article

From what has been said in the preceding Article, the faithful can understand that in bringing us from the relentless tyranny of Satan into liberty, God has conferred a singular and surpassing blessing on the human race. But if we place before our eyes also the plan and means by which He deigned chiefly to accomplish this, then, indeed, we shall see that there is nothing more glorious or magnificent than this divine goodness and beneficence towards us.

First Part of this Article:

"Who was Conceived,"

The pastor, then, should enter on the exposition of this third Article by developing the grandeur of this mystery, which the Sacred Scriptures very frequently propose for our consideration as the principal source of our eternal salvation. Its meaning he should teach to be that we believe and confess that the same Jesus Christ, our only Lord, the Son of God, when He assumed human flesh for us in the womb of the Virgin, was not conceived like other men, from the seed of man, but in a manner transcending the order of nature, that is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; so that the same Person, remaining God as He was from eternity, became man, what He was not before.

That such is the meaning of the above words is clear from the Creed of the Holy Council of Constantinople, which says: Who for us men, and for our salvation,, came down from heaven, and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. The same truth we also find unfolded by St. John the Evangelist, who imbibed from the bosom of the Lord and Saviour Himself the knowledge of this most profound mystery. For when he had declared the nature of the Divine Word as follows: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, he concluded: And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The Word, which is a Person of the Divine Nature, assumed human nature in such a manner that there should be one and the same Person in both the divine and human natures. Hence this admirable union preserved the actions and properties of both natures; and as Pope St. Leo the Great said: The lowliness of the inferior nature was not consumed in the glory of the superior, nor did the assumption of the inferior lessen the glory of the superior.

"By the Holy Ghost"

As an explanation of the words in which this Article is expressed is not to be omitted, the pastor should teach that when we say that the Son of God was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, we do not mean that this Person alone of the Holy Trinity accomplished the mystery of the Incarnation. Although the Son only assumed human nature, yet all the Persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, were authors of this mystery.

It is a principle of Christian faith that whatever God does outside Himself in creation is common to the Three Persons, and that one neither does more than, nor acts without another. But that one emanates from another, this only cannot be common to all; for the Son is begotten of the Father only, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. Anything, however, which proceeds from them extrinsically is the work of the Three Persons without difference of any sort, and of this latter description is the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Of those things, nevertheless, that are common to all, the Sacred Scriptures-often attribute some to one person, some to another. Thus, to the Father they attribute power over all things ; to the Son, wisdom; to the Holy Ghost, love. Hence, as the mystery of the Incarnation manifests the singular and boundless love of God towards us, it is therefore in some sort peculiarly attributed to the Holy Ghost.

In The Incarnation Some Things Were Natural, Others Supernatural

In this mystery we perceive that some things were done which transcend the order of nature, some by the power of nature. Thus, in believing that the body of Christ was formed from the most

pure blood of His Virgin Mother we acknowledge the operation of human nature, this being a law common to the formation of all human bodies, that they should be formed from the blood of the mother.

But what surpasses the order of nature and human comprehension is, that as soon as the Blessed Virgin assented to the announcement of the Angel in these words, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word, the most sacred body of Christ was immediately formed, and to it was united a rational soul enjoying the use of reason; and thus in the same instant of time He was perfect God and perfect man. That this was the astonishing and admirable work of the Holy Ghost cannot be doubted; for according to the order of nature the rational soul is united to the body only after a certain lapse of time.

Again -- and this should overwhelm us with astonishment -- as soon as the soul of Christ was united to His body, the Divinity became united to both; and thus at the same time His body was formed and animated, and the Divinity united to body and soul.

Hence, at the same instant He was perfect God and perfect man, and the most Holy Virgin, having at the same moment conceived God and man, is truly and properly called Mother of God and man. This the Angel signified to her when he said: Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. The event verified the prophecy of Isaias: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son. Elizabeth also declared the same truth when" being filled with the Holy Ghost, she understood the Conception of the Son of God, and said: Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

As the body of Christ was formed of the pure blood of the immaculate Virgin without the aid of man, as we have already said, and by the sole operation of the Holy Ghost, so also, at the moment of His Conception, His soul was enriched with an overflowing fullness of the Spirit of God, and a superabundance of all graces. For God gave not to Him, as to others adorned with holiness and grace, His Spirit by measure, as St. John testifies but poured into His soul the plenitude of all graces so abundantly that of his fullness we all have received.

Although possessing that Spirit by which holy men attain the adoption of sons of God, He cannot, however, be called the adopted son of God; for since He is the Son of God by nature, the grace, or name of adoption, can on no account be deemed applicable to Him.

How To Profit By The Mystery Of The Incarnation

These truths comprise the substance of what appears to demand explanation regarding the admirable mystery of the Conception. To reap from them abundant fruit for salvation the faithful should particularly recall, and frequently reflect, that it is God who assumed human flesh; that the manner in which He became man exceeds our comprehension, not to say our powers of expression; and finally, that He vouchsafed to become man in order that we men might be born again as children of God. When to these subjects they shall have given mature consideration, let them, in the humility of faith, believe and adore all the mysteries contained in this Article, and not indulge a curious inquisitiveness by investigating and scrutinising them -- an attempt scarcely ever unattended with danger.

Second Part Of This Article: "Born Of The Virgin Mary"

These words comprise another part of this Article. In its exposition the pastor should exercise considerable diligence, because the faithful are bound to believe that Jesus the Lord was not only conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, but was also born of the Virgin Mary. The words of the Angel who first announced the happy tidings to the world declare with what joy and delight of soul this mystery of our faith should be meditated upon. Behold, said the Angel, I bring you good tidings of great joy" that shall be to all the people. The same sentiments are clearly conveyed in the song chanted by the heavenly host: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. Then began the fulfilment of the splendid promise made by God to Abraham" that in his seed all the nations of the earth should one day be blessed; for Mary" whom we truly proclaim and venerate as Mother of God, because she brought forth Him who is at once God and man, was descended from King David.

The Nativity Of Christ Transcends The Order Of Nature

But as the Conception itself transcends the order of nature, so also the birth of our Lord presents to our contemplation nothing but what is divine.

Besides, what is admirable beyond the power of thoughts or words to express, He is born of His Mother without any diminution of her maternal virginity, just as He afterwards went forth from the sepulchre while it was closed and sealed, and entered the room in which His disciples were assembled, the doors being shut; or, not to depart from every-day examples, just as the rays of the sun penetrate without breaking or injuring in the least the solid substance of glass, so after a like but more exalted manner did Jesus Christ come forth from His mother's womb without injury to her maternal virginity. This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favoured the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity.

Christ Compared to Adam" Mary to Eve

The Apostle sometimes calls Jesus Christ the second Adam, and compares Him to the first Adam; for as in the first all men die, so in the second all are made alive: and as in the natural order Adam was the father of the human race, so in the supernatural order Christ is The author of grace and of glory.

The Virgin Mother we may also compare to Eve, making the second Eve, that is, Mary, correspond to the first, as we have already shown that the second Adam, that is, Christ, corresponds to the first Adam. By believing the serpent, Eve brought malediction and death on mankind, and Mary, by believing the Angel, became the instrument of The divine goodness in bringing life and benediction to the human race. From Eve we are born children of wrath; from Mary we have received Jesus Christ, and through Him are regenerated children of grace. To Eve it was said: In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. Mary was exempt from this law, for preserving her virginal integrity inviolate she brought forth Jesus the Son of God without experiencing, as we have already said, any sense of pain.

Types and Prophecies of the Conception and Nativity

The mysteries of this admirable Conception and Nativity being, therefore, so great and so numerous, it accorded with the plan of divine Providence to signify them by many types and prophecies. Hence the holy Fathers understood many things which we meet in the Sacred Scriptures to refer to these mysteries, particularly that gate of the sanctuary which Ezechiel saw closed; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which became a great mountain and filled the universe, of which we read in Daniel; the rod of Aaron, which alone budded of all the rods of the princes of Israel; and the bush which Moses saw burr without being consumed.'

The holy Evangelist describes in detail the history of the birth of Christ; but, as the pastor can easily recur to the Sacred Volume, it is unnecessary for us to say more on the subject.

Lessons which this Article Teaches

The pastor should labor to impress deeply on the minds and hearts of the faithful these mysteries, which were written for our learning; first, that by the commemoration of so great a benefit they may make some return of gratitude to God, its author, and next, in order to place before their eyes, as a model for imitation, this striking and singular example of humility.

Humility And Poverty Of Christ

What can be more useful, what better calculated to subdue the pride and haughtiness of the human heart, than to reflect frequently that God humbles Himself in such a manner as to assume our frailty and weakness, in order to communicate to us His glory; that God becomes man, and that He at whose nod, to use the words of Scripture, the pillars of heaven tremble and are affrighted bows His supreme and infinite majesty to minister to man; that He whom the Angels adore in heaven is born on earth ! When such is the goodness of God towards us, what, I ask, should we not do to testify our obedience to His will? With what willingness and alacrity should we not love, embrace, and perform all the duties of humility ?

The faithful should also consider the salutary lessons which Christ at His birth teaches before He begins to speak. He is born in poverty; He is born a stranger under a roof not His own; He is born in a lonely crib; He is born in the depth of winter ! For St. Luke writes as follows: And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Could the Evangelist have described under more humble terms the majesty and glory that filled the heavens and the earth ? He does not say, there was no room in the inn, but there was no room for him who says, the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. As another Evangelist has expressed it: He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Elevation And Dignity Of Man

When the faithful have placed these things before their eyes, let them also reflect that God condescended to assume the lowliness and frailty of our flesh in order to exalt man to the highest degree of dignity. This single reflection, that He who is true and perfect God became man, supplies sufficient proof of the exalted dignity conferred on the human race by the divine bounty; since we may now glory that the Son of God is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, a privilege

not given to Angels, for nowhere, says the Apostle, doth he take hold of the Angels: but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold.

Duty Of Spiritual Nativity

We must also take care lest to our great injury it should happen that just as there was no room for Him in the inn at Bethlehem, in which to be born, so likewise now, after He has been born in the flesh, He should find no room in our hearts in which to be born spiritually. For since He is most desirous of our salvation, this spiritual birth is the object of His most earnest solicitude.

As, then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and in a manner superior to the order of nature, He was made man and was born, was holy and even holiness itself, so does it become our duty to be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God; to walk as new creatures in newness of spirit, and to preserve that holiness and purity of soul which so much becomes men regenerated by the Spirit of God. Thus shall we reflect some faint image of the holy Conception and Nativity of the Son of God, which are the objects of our firm faith, and believing which we revere and adore the wisdom of God in a mystery which is hidden.

ARTICLE IV : "Suffered Under Pontius Pilate, Was Crucified, Dead, And Buried"

Importance Of This Article

How necessary is a knowledge of this Article, and how assiduous the pastor should be in stirring up in the minds of the faithful the frequent recollection of our Lord's Passion" we learn from the Apostle when he says that he knows nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.' The pastor, therefore, should exercise the greatest care and pains in giving a thorough explanation of this subject" in order that the faithful" being moved by the remembrance of so great a benefit" may give themselves entirely to the contemplation of the goodness and love of God towards us.

First Part of this Article: "'Suffered Under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified,,

The first part of this Article (of the second we shall treat hereafter) proposes for our belief that when Pontius Pilate governed the province of Judea" under Tiberius Caesar" Christ the Lord was nailed to a cross. Having been seized" mocked, outraged and tortured in various forms" He was finally crucified.

"Suffered,"

It cannot be a matter of doubt that His soul" as to its inferior part" was sensible of these torments; for as He really assumed human nature" it is a necessary consequence that He really, and in His soul, experienced a most acute sense of pain. Hence these words of the Saviour: My soul is sorrowful even unto death.

Although human nature was united to the Divine Person, He felt the bitterness of His Passion as acutely as if no such union had existed" because in the one Person of Jesus Christ were preserved the properties of both natures" human and divine; and therefore what was passible and mortal remained passible and mortal; while what was impassible and immortal, that is, His Divine Nature, continued impassible and immortal.

"Under Pontius Pilate"

Since we find it here so diligently recorded that Jesus Christ suffered when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea, the pastor should explain the reason. By fixing the time, which we find also done by the Apostle Paul, so important and so necessary an event is rendered more easily ascertainable by all. Furthermore those words show that the Saviour's prediction was really verified: They shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to be mocked and scourged and crucified.

"Was Crucified"

The fact that He suffered death precisely on the wood of the cross must also be attributed to a particular counsel of God, which decreed that life should return by the way whence death had arisen. The serpent who had triumphed over our first parents by the wood (of a tree) was vanquished by Christ on the wood of the cross.

Many other reasons which the Fathers have discussed in detail might be adduced to show that it was fit that our Redeemer should suffer death on the cross rather than in any other way. But, as the pastor will show" it is enough for the faithful to believe that this kind of death was chosen by the Saviour because it appeared better adapted and more appropriate to the redemption of the human race; for there certainly could be none more ignominious and humiliating. Not only among the Gentiles was the punishment of the cross held accursed and full of shame and infamy, but even in the Law of Moses the man is called accursed that hangeth on a tree.

Importance Of The History Of The Passion

Furthermore, the pastor should not omit the historical part of this Article, which has been so carefully set forth by the holy Evangelists; so that the faithful may be acquainted with at least the principal points of this mystery, that is to say, such as seem more necessary to confirm the truth of our faith. For it is on this Article, as on their foundation, that the Christian faith and religion rest; and if this truth be firmly established, all the rest is secure. Indeed, if one thing more than another presents difficulty to the mind and understanding of man, assuredly it is the mystery of the cross, which, beyond all doubt, must be considered the most difficult of all; so much so that only with great difficulty can we grasp the fact that our salvation depends on the cross, and on Him who for us was nailed thereon. In this, however, as the Apostle teaches, we may well admire the wonderful Providence of God; for, seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. It is no wonder, then, that the Prophets, before the coming of Christ, and the Apostles, after His death and Resurrection, labored so strenuously to convince mankind that He was the Redeemer of the world, and to bring them under the power and obedience of the Crucified.

Figures And Prophecies Of The Passion And Death Of The Saviour

Since, therefore, nothing is so far above the reach of human reason as the mystery of the cross, the Lord immediately after the fall ceased not, both by figures and prophecies, to signify the death by which His Son was to die.

To mention a few of these types. First of all, Abel, who fell a victim of the envy of his brother, Isaac who was commanded to be offered in sacrifice, the lamb immolated by the Jews on their departure from Egypt, and also the brazen serpent lifted up by Moses in the desert, were all figures of the Passion and death of Christ the Lord.

As to the Prophets, how many there were who foretold Christ's Passion and death is too well known to require development here. Not to speak of David, whose Psalms embrace all the principal mysteries of Redemption, the oracles of Isaias in particular are so clear and graphic that he might be said rather to have recorded a past than predicted a future event. a

Second Part Of This Article: "Dead, And Buried"

Christ Really Died

The pastor should explain that these words present for our belief that Jesus Christ, after He was crucified, really died and was buried. It is not without just reason that this is proposed to the faithful as a separate object of belief, since there were some who denied His death upon the cross. The Apostles, therefore, were justly of opinion that to such an error should be opposed the doctrine of faith contained in this Article, the truth of which is placed beyond the possibility of doubt by the united testimony of all the Evangelists, who record that Jesus yielded up the ghost.

Moreover as Christ was true and perfect man, He of course was capable of dying. Now man dies when the soul is separated from the body. When, therefore, we say that Jesus died, we mean that His soul was disunited from His body. We do not admit, however, that the Divinity was separated from His body. On the contrary, we firmly believe and profess that when His soul was dissociated from His body, His Divinity continued always united both to His body in the sepulchre and to His soul in limbo. It became the Son of God to die, that, through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death that is the devil, and might deliver them, who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude.

Christ Died Freely

It was the peculiar privilege of Christ the Lord to have died when He Himself decreed to die, and to have died not so much by external violence as by internal assent. Not only His death, but also its time and place, were ordained by Him. For thus Isaias wrote: He was offered because it was his own will. The Lord before His Passion, declared the same of Himself: I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it again. As to the time and place of His death, He said, when Herod insidiously sought His life: Go and tell that fox: Behold I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am consummated. Nevertheless I must walk today and to-morrow, and the day following, because it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." He

therefore offered Himself not involuntarily or by compulsion but of His own free will. Going to meet His enemies He said: I am he; and all the punishments which injustice and cruelty inflicted on Him He endured voluntarily.

The Thought Of Christ's Death Should Excite Our Love And Gratitude

When we meditate on the sufferings and all the torments of the Redeemer, nothing is better calculated to stir our souls than the thought that He endured them thus voluntarily. Were anyone to endure all kinds of suffering for our sake, not because he chose them but simply because he could not escape them, we should not consider this a very great favour; but were he to endure death freely, and for our sake only, having had it in his power to avoid it, this indeed would be a benefit so overwhelming as to deprive even the most grateful heart, not only of the power of returning but even of feeling due thanks. We may hence form an idea of the transcendent and intense love of Jesus Christ towards us, and of His divine and boundless claims to our gratitude.

Christ Was Really Buried

When we confess that He was buried, we do not make this, as it were, a distinct part of the Article, as if it presented any new difficulty which is not implied in what we have said of His death; for if we believe that Christ died, we can also easily believe that He was buried. The word buried was added in the Creed, first, that His death might be rendered more certain, for the strongest argument of a person's death is the proof that his body was buried; and, secondly, to render the miracle of His Resurrection more authentic and illustrious.

It is not, however, our belief that the body of Christ alone was interred. The above words propose, as the principal object of our belief, that God was buried; as according to the rule of Catholic faith we also say with the strictest truth that God died, and that God was born of a virgin. For as the Divinity was never separated from His body which was laid in the sepulchre, we truly confess that God was buried.

Circumstances Of Christ's Burial

As to the manner and place of His burial, what the holy Evangelists record on these subjects will be sufficient for the pastor. There are, however, two things which demand particular attention; the one, that the body of Christ was in no degree corrupted in the sepulchre, according to the prediction of the Prophet: Thou wilt not give thy holy one to see corruption; the other, and it regards the several parts of this Article, that burial, Passion, and also death, apply to Christ Jesus not as God but as man. To suffer and die are incidental to human nature only; yet they are also attributed to God, since, as is clear, they are predicated with propriety of that Person who is at once perfect God and perfect man.

Useful Considerations on the Passion

When the faithful have once attained the knowledge of these things, the pastor should next proceed to explain those particulars of the Passion and death of Christ which may enable them if not to comprehend, at least to contemplate, the immensity of so stupendous a mystery.

The Dignity Of The Sufferer

And first we must consider who it is that suffers all these things. His dignity we cannot express in words or even conceive in mind. Of Him St. John says, that He is the Word which was with God. And the Apostle describes Him in sublime terms, saying that this is He -whom God hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world, who being the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins. sitteth on the right hand of the majesty on high. In a word, Jesus Christ, the God-man, suffers ! The Creator suffers for His creatures, the Master for His servant. He suffers by whom the Angels, men, the heavens, and the elements were made; in whom, by whom, and of whom, are all things.

It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise that while He agonised under such an accumulation of torments the whole frame of the universe was convulsed; for as the Scriptures inform us, the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, there was darkness over all the earth; and the sun was obscured. If, then, even mute and inanimate nature sympathised with the sufferings of her Creator, let the faithful consider with what tears they, the living stones of this edifice, should manifest their sorrow.

Reasons Why Christ Suffered

The reasons why the Saviour suffered are also to be explained, that thus the greatness and intensity of the divine love towards us may the more fully appear. Should anyone inquire why the Son of God underwent His most bitter Passion, he will find that besides the guilt inherited from our first parents the principal causes were the vice's and crimes which have been perpetrated from the beginning of the world to the present day and those which will be committed to the end of time. In His Passion and death the Son of God, our Saviour, intended to atone for and blot out the sins of all ages, to offer for them to his Father a full and abundant satisfaction.

Besides, to increase the dignity of this mystery, Christ not only suffered for sinners, but even for those who were the very authors and ministers of all the torments He endured. Of this the Apostle reminds us in these words addressed to the Hebrews: Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. In this guilt are involved all those who fall frequently into sin; for, as our sins consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the cross, most certainly those who wallow in sin and iniquity crucify to themselves again the Son of God, as far as in them lies, and make a mockery of Him. This guilt seems more enormous in us than in the Jews, since according to the testimony of the same Apostle: If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory; while we, on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet denying Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on him.

Christ Was Delivered Over To Death By The Father And By Himself

But that Christ the Lord was also delivered over to death by the Father and by Himself, the Scriptures bear witness. For in Isaias (God the Father) says For the wickedness of my people have I struck him. And a little before the same Prophet filled with the Spirit of God, cried out, as he saw the Lord covered with stripes and wounds: All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. But of the Son it is written: If he shall lay down his life for sin, he shall see a long-lived seed. This the Apostle expresses in language still stronger when, in order to show how confidently we, on our part, should trust in the boundless mercy and goodness of God, he says: He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things? a

The: Bitterness Of Christ's Passion

The next subject of the pastor's instruction is the bitterness of the Redeemer's Passion. If we bear in mind that his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground, and this, at the sole anticipation of the torments and agony which He was about to endure, we must at once perceive that His sorrows admitted of no increase. For if the very idea of impending evils was overwhelming, and the sweat of blood shows that it was, what are we to suppose their actual endurance to have been ?

That Christ our Lord suffered the most excruciating torments of mind and body is certain. In the first place, there was no part of His body that did not experience the most agonising torture. His hands and feet were fastened with nails to the cross; His head was pierced with thorns and smitten with a reed; His face was befouled with spittle and buffeted with blows; His whole body was covered with stripes.

Furthermore men of all ranks and conditions were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. Gentiles and Jews were the advisers, the authors, the ministers of His Passion: Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, all the rest deserted Him.

And while He hangs from the cross are we not at a loss which to deplore, His agony, or His ignominy, or both? Surely no death more shameful, none more cruel, could have been devised than this. It was the punishment usually reserved for the most guilty and atrocious malefactors, a death whose slowness aggravated the exquisite pain and torture |

His agony was increased by the very constitution and frame of His body. Formed by the power of the Holy Ghost, it was more perfect and better organised than the bodies of other men can be, and was therefore endowed with a superior susceptibility and a keener sense of all the torments which it endured.

And as to His interior anguish of soul, that too was no doubt extreme; for those among the Saints who had to endure torments and tortures were not without consolation from above, which enabled them not only to bear their sufferings patiently, but in many instances, to feel, in the very midst of them, filled with interior joy. I rejoice, says the Apostle, in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church;' and in another place: I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations. Christ our Lord tempered with no admixture of sweetness the bitter chalice of His Passion but permitted His human nature to feel as acutely every species of torment as if He were only man, and not also God.

Fruits Of Christ's Passion

It only remains now that the pastor carefully explain the blessings and advantages which flow from the Passion of Christ. In the first place, then, the Passion of our Lord was our deliverance from sin; for, as St. John says, He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. He hath quickened you together with him, says the Apostle, forgiving you all offences, blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross.

In the next place He has rescued us from the tyranny of the devil, for our Lord Himself says: Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.

Again He discharged the punishment due to our sins. And as no sacrifice more pleasing and acceptable could have been offered to God, He reconciled us to the Father, appeased His wrath, and made Him favourable to us.

Finally, by taking away our sins He opened to us heaven, which was closed by the common sin of mankind. And this the Apostle pointed out when he said: We have confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ. Nor are we without a type and figure of this mystery in the Old Law. For those who were prohibited to return into their native country before the death of the high-priest typified that no one, however just and holy may have been his life, could gain admission into the celestial country until the eternal High-priest, Christ Jesus, had died, and by His death immediately opened heaven to those who, purified by the Sacraments and gifted with faith, hope, and charity, become partakers of His Passion.

Christ's Passion, -- A Satisfaction, A Sacrifice, A Redemption An Example

The pastor should teach that all these inestimable and divine blessings flow to us from the Passion of Christ. First, indeed, because the satisfaction which Jesus Christ has in an admirable manner made to God the Father for our sins is full and complete. The price which He paid for our ransom was not only adequate and equal to our debts, but far exceeded them.

Again, it (the Passion of Christ) was a sacrifice most acceptable to God, for when offered by His Son on the altar of the cross, it entirely appeased the wrath and indignation of the Father. This word (sacrifice) the Apostle uses when he says: Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.

Furthermore, it was a redemption, of which the Prince of the Apostles says: You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled. While the Apostle teaches: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

Besides these incomparable blessings, we have also received another of the highest importance; namely, that in the Passion alone we have the most illustrious example of the exercise of every virtue. For He so displayed patience, humility, exalted charity, meekness, obedience and unshaken firmness of soul, not only in suffering for justice, sake, but also in meeting death, that we may truly say on the day of His Passion alone, our Saviour offered, in His own Person, a living exemplification of all the moral precepts inculcated during the entire time of His public ministry.

Admonition

This exposition of the saving Passion and death of Christ the Lord we have given briefly. Would to God that these mysteries were always present to our minds, and that we learned to suffer, die, and be buried together with our Lord; so that from henceforth, having cast aside all stain of sin, and rising with Him to newness of life, we may at length, through His grace and mercy, be found worthy to be made partakers of the celestial kingdom and glory !

ARTICLE V : "HE DESCENDED INTO HELL, THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD"

Importance Of This Article

To know the glory of the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which we last treated, is highly important; but of still higher importance is it to the faithful to know the splendid triumphs which He obtained by having subdued the devil and despoiled the abodes of hell. Of these triumphs, and also of His Resurrection, we are now about to speak.

Although the latter presents to us a subject which might with propriety be treated under a separate and distinct head, yet following the example of the holy Fathers, we have deemed it fitting to unite it with His descent into hell.

First Part of this Article: "He Descended into Hell"

In the first part of this Article, then, we profess that immediately after the death of Christ His soul descended into hell, and dwelt there as long as His body remained in the tomb; and also that the one Person of Christ was at the same time in hell and in the sepulchre. Nor should this excite surprise; for, as we have already frequently said, although His soul was separated from His body, His Divinity was never parted from either His soul or His body.

"Hell"

As the pastor, by explaining the meaning of the word hell in this place may throw considerable light on the exposition of this Article, it is to be observed that by the word hell is not here meant the sepulchre, as some have not less impiously than ignorantly imagined; for in the preceding Article we learned that Christ the Lord was buried, and there was no reason why the Apostles, in delivering an Article of faith, should repeat the same thing in other and more obscure terms.

Hell, then, here signifies those secret abodes in which are detained the souls that have not obtained the happiness of heaven. In this sense the word is frequently used in Scripture. Thus the Apostle says: At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and in the Acts of the Apostles St. Peter says that Christ the Lord is again risen, having loosed the sorrows of hell.

Different Abodes Called Hell"

These abodes are not all of the same nature, for among them is that most loathsome and dark prison in which the souls of the damned are tormented with the unclean spirits in eternal and inextinguishable fire. This place is called gehenna, the bottomless pit, and is hell strictly so-called.

Among them is also the fire of purgatory, in which the souls of just men are cleansed by a temporary punishment, in order to be admitted into their eternal country, into which nothing defiled entereth. The truth of this doctrine, founded, as holy Councils declare, ' on Scripture, and confirmed by Apostolic tradition, demands exposition from the pastor, all the more diligent and frequent, because we live in times when men endure not sound doctrine.

Lastly, the third kind of abode is that into which the souls of the just before the coming of Christ the Lord, were received, and where, without experiencing any sort of pain, but supported by the blessed hope of redemption, they enjoyed peaceful repose. To liberate these holy souls, who, in the bosom of Abraham were expecting the Saviour, Christ the Lord descended into hell.

"He Descended"

We are not to imagine that His power and virtue only, and not also His soul, descended into hell; but we are firmly to believe that His soul itself, really and substantially, descended thither, according to this conclusive testimony of David: Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.

But although Christ descended into hell, His supreme power was in no degree lessened, nor was the splendour of His sanctity obscured by any blemish. His descent served rather to prove that whatever had been foretold of His sanctity was true; and that, as He had previously demonstrated by so many miracles, He was truly the Son of God.

This we shall easily understand by comparing the causes of the descent of Christ with those of other men. They descended as captives; He as free and victorious among the dead, to subdue those demons by whom, in consequence of guilt, they were held in captivity. Furthermore all others descended, either to endure the most acute torments, or, if exempt from other pain, to be deprived of the vision of God, and to be tortured by the delay of the glory and happiness for which they yearned; Christ the Lord descended, on the contrary, not to suffer, but to liberate the holy and the just from their painful captivity, and to impart to them the fruit of His Passion. His supreme dignity and power, therefore, suffered no diminution by His descent into hell.

Why He Descended into Hell

To Liberate The Just

Having explained these things, the pastor should next proceed to teach that Christ the Lord descended into hell, in order that having despoiled the demons, He might liberate from prison those holy Fathers and the other just souls, and might bring them into heaven with Himself. This He accomplished in an admirable and most glorious manner; for His august presence at once shed a celestial lustre upon the captives and filled them with inconceivable joy and delight. He

also imparted to them that supreme happiness which consists in the vision of God, thus verifying His promise to the thief on the cross: This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

This deliverance of the just was long before predicted by Osee in these words: O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite; ' and also by the Prophet Zachary: Thou also by the blood of thy testament hast sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water; and lastly, the same is expressed by the Apostle in these words: Despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in himself.

But the better to understand the efficacy of this mystery we should frequently call to mind that not only the just who were born after the coming of our Lord, but also those who preceded Him from the days of Adam, or who shall be born until the end of time, obtain their salvation through the benefit of His Passion. Wherefore before His death and Resurrection heaven was closed against every child of Adam. The souls of the just, on their departure from this life, were either borne to the bosom of Abraham; or, as is still the case with those who have something to be washed away or satisfied for, were purified in the fire of purgatory.

To Proclaim His Power

Another reason why Christ the Lord descended into hell is that there, as well as in heaven and on earth, He might proclaim His power and authority, and that every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

And here, who is not filled with admiration and astonishment when he contemplates the infinite love of God for man! Not satisfied with having undergone for our sake a most cruel death, He penetrates the inmost recesses of the earth to transport into bliss the souls whom He so dearly loved and whose liberation from thence He had achieved.

Second Part of this Article: "The Third Day He arose again from the Dead"

We now come to the second part of the Article, and how indefatigable should be the labours of the pastor in its exposition we learn from these words of the Apostle: Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead. This command no doubt was addressed not only to Timothy, but to all others who have care of souls.

The meaning of the Article is this: Christ the Lord expired on the cross, on Friday at the ninth hour, and was buried on the evening of the same day by His disciples, who with the permission of the governor, Pilate, laid the body of the Lord, taken down from the cross, in a new tomb, situated in a garden near at hand. Early on the morning of the third day after His death, that is, on Sunday, His soul was reunited to His body, and thus He who was dead during those three days arose, and returned again to life, from which He had departed when dying.

"He arose Again"

By the word Resurrection, however, we are not merely to understand that Christ was raised from the dead, which happened to many others, but that He rose by His own power and virtue, a singular prerogative peculiar to Him alone. For it is incompatible with nature and was never given

to man to raise himself by his own power, from death to life. This was reserved for the almighty power of God, as we learn from these words of the Apostle: Although he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. This divine power, having never been separated, either from His body in the grave, or from His soul in hell, there existed a divine force both within the body, by which it could be again united to the soul, and within the soul, by which it could again return to the body. Thus He was able by His own power to return to life and rise from the dead.

This David, filled with the spirit of God, foretold in these words: His right hand hath wrought for him salvation, and his arm is holy. Our Lord confirmed this by the divine testimony of His own mouth when He said: I lay down my life that I may take it again . . . and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. To the Jews He also said, in corroboration of His doctrine: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Although the Jews understood Him to have spoken thus of that magnificent Temple built of stone, yet as the Scripture testifies in the same place, he spoke of the temple of his body. We sometimes, it is true, read in Scripture that He was raised by the Father; but this refers to Him as man, just as those passages on the other hand, which say that He rose by His own power relate to Him as God.

"From the Dead"

It is also the peculiar privilege of Christ to have been the first who enjoyed this divine prerogative of rising from the dead, for He is called in Scripture the first-begotten from the dead, and also the first-born of the dead. The Apostle also says: Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep: for by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But every one in his own order: the first-fruits Christ, then they that are of Christ.

These words of the Apostle are to be understood of a perfect resurrection, by which we are raised to an immortal life and are no longer subject to the necessity of dying. In this resurrection Christ the Lord holds the first place; for if we speak of resurrection; that is, of a return to life, subject to the necessity of again dying, many were thus raised from the dead before Christ, all of whom, however, were restored to life to die again. But Christ the Lord, having subdued and conquered death, so arose that He could die no more! according to' this most clear testimony: Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him.

"The Third Day"

In explanation of the additional words of the Article, the third day, the pastor should inform the people that they must not think our Lord remained in the grave during the whole of these three days. But as He lay in the sepulchre one full day, a part of the preceding and a part of the following day, He is said, with strictest truth, to have lain in the grave for three days, and on the third day to have risen again from the dead.

To prove that He was God He did not delay His Resurrection to the end of the world; while, on the other hand, to convince us that He was truly man and really died, He rose not immediately, but on the third day after His death, a space of time sufficient to prove the reality of His death.

"According to the Scriptures"

Here the Fathers of the first Council of Constantinople added the words, according to the Scriptures, which they took from St. Paul. These words they embodied with the Creed, because the same Apostle teaches the absolute necessity of the mystery of the Resurrection when he says: If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . for you are yet in your sins. Hence,, admiring our belief of this Article St. Augustine says: It is no great thing to believe that Christ died. This the pagans, Jews, and all the wicked believe; in a word, all believe that Christ died. But that He rose from the dead is the belief of the Christians. To believe that He rose again, this we deem of great moment.

Hence it is that our Lord very frequently spoke to His disciples of His Resurrection, and seldom or never of His Passion without adverting to His Resurrection. Thus, when He said: The son of man . . . shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death; He added: and the third day he shall rise again.' Also when the Jews called upon Him to give an attestation of the truth of His doctrine by some miraculous sign He said: A sign shall not be given to them, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whales belly three days and three nights: so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

Three Useful Considerations on this Article

To understand still better the force and meaning of this Article, there are three things which we must consider and understand: first, why the Resurrection was necessary; secondly, its end and object; thirdly, the blessings and advantages of which it is to us the source.

Necessity Of The Resurrection

With regard to the first, it was necessary that Christ should rise again in order to manifest the justice of God; for it was most congruous that He who through obedience to God was degraded, and loaded with ignominy, should by Him be exalted. This is a reason assigned by the Apostle when he says to the Philippians: He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him. He rose also to confirm our faith, which is necessary for justification; for the Resurrection of Christ from the dead by His own power affords an irrefragable proof that He was the Son of God. Again the Resurrection nourishes and sustains our hope. As Christ rose again, we rest on an assured hope that we too shall rise again; the members must necessarily arrive at the condition of their head. This is the conclusion which St. Paul seems to draw when he writes to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians.' And Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, says: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively nope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto the inheritance incorruptible.

Finally, the Resurrection of our Lord, as the pastor should inculcate, was necessary to complete the mystery of our salvation and redemption. By His death Christ liberated us from sin; by His Resurrection, He restored to us the most important of those privileges which we had forfeited by sin. Hence these words of the Apostle: He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification. That nothing, therefore, may be wanting to the work of our salvation, it was necessary that as He died, He should also rise again.'

Ends Of The Resurrection

From what has been said we can perceive what important advantages the Resurrection of Christ the Lord has conferred on the faithful. In the Resurrection we acknowledge God to be immortal, full of glory, the conqueror of death and the devil; and all this we are firmly to believe and openly to profess of Christ Jesus.

Again, the Resurrection of Christ effects for us the resurrection of our bodies not only because it was the efficient cause of this mystery, but also because we all ought to arise after the example of the Lord. For with regard to the resurrection of the body we have this testimony of the Apostle: By a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. In all that God did to accomplish the mystery of our redemption He made use of the humanity of Christ as an effective instrument, and hence His Resurrection was, as it were, an instrument for the accomplishment of our resurrection.

It may also be called the model of ours, inasmuch as His Resurrection was the most perfect of all. And as His body, rising to immortal glory, was changed, so shall our bodies also, before frail and mortal, be restored and clothed with glory and immortality. In the language of the Apostle: We look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory.

The same may be said of a soul dead in sin. How the Resurrection of Christ is proposed to such a soul as the model of her resurrection the same Apostle shows in these words: As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Again a little further on he says: Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: so do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus.

Advantages Of The: Resurrection

From the Resurrection of Christ, therefore, we should draw two lessons: the one, that after we have washed away the stains of sin, we should begin to lead a new life, distinguished by integrity, innocence, holiness, modesty, justice, beneficence and humility; the other, that we should so persevere in that newness of life as never more, with the divine assistance, to stray from the paths of virtue on which we have once entered.

Nor do the words of the Apostle prove only that the Resurrection of Christ is proposed as the model of our resurrection; they also declare that it gives us power to rise again, and imparts to us strength and courage to persevere in holiness and righteousness, and in the observance of the Commandments of God. For as His death not only furnishes us with an example, but also supplies us with strength to die to sin, so also His Resurrection invigorates us to attain righteousness, so that thenceforward serving God in piety and holiness, we may walk in the newness of life to which we have risen. By His Resurrection, our Lord accomplished this especially that we, who before died with Him to sin and to the world, should rise also with Him to a new order and manner of life.

Signs Of Spiritual Resurrection

The principal signs of this resurrection from sin which should be noted are taught us by the Apostle. For when he says: If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, he distinctly tells us that they who desire to possess life, honour, repose and riches, there chiefly where Christ dwells, have truly risen with Christ.

When he adds: Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth, he gives, as it were, another sign by which we may ascertain if we have truly risen with Christ. As a relish for food usually indicates a healthy state of the body, so with regard to the soul, if a person relishes whatever things are true, whatever modest, whatever just, whatever holy, and experiences within him the sweetness of heavenly things, this we may consider a very strong proof that such a one has risen with Christ Jesus to a new and spiritual life.

ARTICLE VI : "HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY"

Importance Of This Article

Filled with the Spirit of God, and contemplating the blessed and glorious Ascension of our Lord, the Prophet David exhorts all to celebrate that splendid triumph with the greatest joy and gladness: Clap your hands, all ye nations: shout unto God with he voice of joy.... God is ascended with jubilee.

The pastor will hence learn that this mystery should be explained with the greatest diligence; and that he should take care that the people not only perceive it with faith and understanding, but that they also strive as far as possible, with the Lord's help to reflect it in their lives and actions.

First Part of this Article: "He Ascended into Heaven"

With regard, then, to the exposition of this sixth Article, which has reference principally to this divine mystery, we shall begin with its first part, and point out its force and meaning.

"Into Heaven"

This, then, the faithful must believe without hesitation, that Jesus Christ, having fully accomplished the work of Redemption, ascended as man, body and soul, into heaven; for as God He never forsook heaven, filling as He does all places with His Divinity.

"He Ascended"

The pastor is also to teach that He ascended by His own power, not being taken up by the power of another, as was Elias, who was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot; or, as the Prophet Habacuc,

or Philip, the deacon, who were borne through the air by the divine power, and traversed great distances.

Neither did He ascend into heaven solely by the exercise of His supreme power as God, but also by virtue of the power which He possessed as man. Although human power alone was insufficient to accomplish this, yet the virtue with which the blessed soul of Christ was endowed was capable of moving the body as it pleased, and His body, now glorified, readily obeyed the behest of the soul that moved it. Hence, we believe that Christ ascended into heaven as God and man by His own power.

Second Part of this Article: "Sitteth at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty"

The words He sitteth at the right hand of the Father form the second part of this Article. In these words we observe a figure of speech; that is, a use of words in other than their literal sense, as frequently happens in Scripture, when, accommodating its language to human ideas, it attributes human affections and human members to God, who, spirit as He is, admits of nothing corporeal.

"At the Right Hand"

As among men he who sits at the right hand is considered to occupy the most honourable place, so, transferring the same idea to celestial things, to express the glory which Christ as man has obtained above all others, we confess that He sits at the right hand of the Father.

"Sitteth"

To sit does not imply here position and posture of body, but expresses the firm and permanent possession of royal and supreme power and glory which He received from the Father, and of which the Apostle says: Raising him up from the dead, and setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and domination, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and he hath subjected all things under his feet. These words manifestly imply that this glory belongs to our Lord in so special and exclusive a manner that it cannot apply to any other created being. Hence in another place the Apostle testifies: To which of the angels said he at any time: Sit on my right hand.

Reflections on the Ascension:

Its History

The pastor should explain the sense of the Article more at length by detailing the history of the Ascension, of which the Evangelist St. Luke has left us an orderly description in the Acts of the Apostles.

Greatness Of This Mystery

In this exposition he should observe, in the first place, that all other mysteries refer to the Ascension as to their end and find in it their perfection and completion; for as all the mysteries of religion commence with the Incarnation of our Lord, so His sojourn on earth terminates with His Ascension.

Moreover the other Articles of the Creed which regard Christ the Lord show His great humility and lowliness. Nothing can be conceived more humble, nothing more lowly, than that the Son of God assumed our weak human nature, and suffered and died for us. But nothing more magnificently, nothing more admirably, proclaims His sovereign glory and divine majesty than what is contained in the present and in the preceding Article, in which we declare that He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father.

Reasons Of The Ascension

When the pastor has explained these truths, he should next accurately show why Christ the Lord ascended into heaven.

First of all, He ascended because the glorious kingdom of the highest heavens, not the obscure abode of this earth, presented a suitable dwelling place for Him whose body, rising from the tomb, was clothed with the glory of immortality.

He ascended, however, not only to possess the throne of glory and the kingdom which He had merited by His blood, but also to attend to whatever regards our salvation.

Again, He ascended to prove thereby that His kingdom is not of this world. For the kingdoms of this world are earthly and transient, and are based upon wealth and the power of the flesh; but the kingdom of Christ is not, as the Jews expected, earthly, but spiritual and eternal. Its resources and riches, too, are spiritual, as He showed by placing His throne in the heavens, where they are counted richer and wealthier who seek most earnestly the things that are of God, according to these words of St. James: Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him?

He also ascended into heaven in order to teach us to follow Him thither in mind and heart. For as by His death and Resurrection He bequeathed to us an example of dying and rising again in spirit, so by His Ascension He teaches and instructs us that though dwelling on earth, we should raise ourselves in desire to heaven, confessing that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, seeking a country and that we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, for, says the same Apostle, our conversation is in heaven

Results Of The Ascension

The extent and greatness of the unutterable blessings which the bounty of God has showered on us were long before, as the Apostle interprets, sung by the inspired David: Ascending on high, he led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men.' For on the tenth day He sent down the Holy Ghost, with whose power and plenitude He filled the multitude of the faithful then present, and so fulfilled

that splendid promise: It is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

He also ascended into heaven, according to the Apostle, that he may appear in the presence of God for us, and discharge for us the office of advocate with the Father. My little children, says St. John, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just: and he is the propitiation for our sins. There is nothing from which the faithful should derive greater joy and gladness of soul than from the reflection that Jesus Christ is constituted our advocate and the mediator of our salvation with the Eternal Father, with whom His influence and authority are supreme.

Finally, by His Ascension He has prepared for us a place, as He had promised, and has entered, as our head, in the name of us all, into the possession of the glory of heaven." Ascending into heaven, He threw open its gates, which had been closed by the sin of Adam; and, as He foretold to His disciples at His Last Supper, secured to us a way by which we may arrive at eternal happiness. In order to give an open proof of this by its fulfilment, He introduced with Himself into the mansions of eternal bliss the souls of the just whom He had liberated from hell.

Virtues Promoted By The Ascension.

A series of important advantages followed in the train of this admirable profusion of celestial gifts. In the first place, the merit of our faith was considerably augmented; because faith has for its object those things which fall not under the senses, but are far raised above the reach of human reason and intelligence. If, therefore, the Lord had not departed from us, the merit of our faith would not be the same; for Christ the Lord has said: Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed

In the next place, the Ascension of Christ into heaven contributes much to confirm our hope. Believing that Christ, as man, ascended into heaven, and placed our nature at the right hand of God the Father, we are animated with a strong hope that we, as members, shall also ascend thither, to be there united to our Head, according to these words of our Lord Himself: Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me

Another most important advantage is that He has taken our affections to heaven and inflamed them with the Spirit of God; for most truly has it been said that where our treasure is, there also is our heart. And, indeed, were Christ the Lord still dwelling on earth, the contemplation of His human nature and His company would absorb all our thoughts, and we should view the author of such blessings only as man, and cherish towards Him a sort of earthly affection. But by His Ascension into heaven He has spiritualised our affection and has made us venerate and love as God Him whom, on account of His absence, we see only in thought. This we learn in part from the example of the Apostles, who while our Lord was personally present with them, seemed to judge of Him in some measure in a human light; and in part from these words of our Lord Himself: It is expedient to you that I go. The imperfect affection with which they loved Christ Jesus when present had to be perfected by divine love, and that by the coming of the Holy Ghost; and therefore He immediately subjoins: If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you.

The Ascension Benefits The Church And The Individual

Besides, He thus enlarged His household on earth, that is, His Church, which was to be governed by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He left Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, as its chief

pastor and supreme head upon earth; moreover he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors. Thus seated at the right hand of the Father He continually bestows different gifts on different men; for as the Apostle testifies: To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ.

Finally, what we have already taught of the mystery of His death and Resurrection the faithful should deem not less true of His Ascension. For although we owe our Redemption and salvation to the Passion of Christ, whose merits opened heaven to the just, yet His Ascension is not only proposed to us as a model, which teaches us to look on high and ascend in spirit into heaven, but it also imparts to us a divine virtue which enables us to accomplish what it teaches.

ARTICLE VII : "FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD"

Meaning Of This Article

For the glory and adornment of His Church Jesus Christ is invested with three eminent offices and functions: those of Redeemer, Mediator, and Judge. Since in the preceding Articles it was shown that the human race was redeemed by His Passion and death, and since by His Ascension into heaven it is manifest that He has undertaken the perpetual advocacy and patronage of our cause, it remains that in this Article we set forth His character as Judge. The scope and intent of the Article is to declare that on the last day Christ the Lord will judge the whole human race.

"From Thence He Shall Come"

The Sacred Scriptures inform us that there are two comings of the Son of God: the one when He assumed human flesh for our salvation in the womb of a virgin; the other when He shall come at the end of the world to judge all mankind. This latter coming is called in Scripture the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord, says the Apostle, shall come, as a thief in the night; and our Lord Himself says: Of that day and hour no one knoweth.

"To Judge the Living and the Dead"

In proof of the (last) judgment it is enough to adduce the authority of the Apostle: We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil. There are numerous passages of Sacred Scripture which the pastor will find in various places and which not only establish the truth of the dogma, but also place it in vivid colours before the eyes of the faithful. And if, from the beginning of the world that day of the Lord, on which He was clothed with our flesh, was sighed for by all as the foundation of their hope of deliverance; so also, after the death and Ascension of the Son of God, we should make that other day of the Lord the object of our most earnest desires, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God.'

Two Judgments

In explaining this subject the pastor should distinguish two different occasions on which everyone must appear in the presence of the Lord to render an account of all his thoughts, words and actions, and to receive immediate sentence from his Judge.

The first takes place when each one of us departs this life; for then he is instantly placed before the judgment-seat of God, where all that he has ever done or spoken or thought during life shall be subjected to the most rigid scrutiny. This is called the particular judgment.

The second occurs when on the same day and in the same place all men shall stand together before the tribunal of their Judge, that in the presence and hearing of all human beings of all times each may know his final doom and sentence. The announcement of this judgment will constitute no small part of the pain and punishment of the wicked; whereas the good and just will derive great reward and consolation from the fact that it will then appear what each one was in life. This is called the general judgment.

Reasons For General Judgment

It is necessary to show why, besides the particular judgment of each individual, a general one should also be passed upon all men.

Those who depart this life sometimes leave behind them children who imitate their conduct, dependents, followers and others who admire and advocate their example, language and actions. Now by all these circumstances the rewards or punishments of the dead must needs be increased, since the good or bad influence of example, affecting as it does the conduct of many, is to terminate only with the end of the world. Justice demands that in order to form a proper estimate of all these good or bad actions and words a thorough investigation should be made. This, however, could not be without a general judgment of all men.

Moreover, as the character of the virtuous frequently suffers from misrepresentation, while that of the wicked obtains the commendation of virtue, the justice of God demands that the former recover, in the public assembly and judgment of all men, the good name of which they had been unjustly deprived before men.

Again, as the just and the wicked performed their good and evil actions in this life not without the cooperation of the body, it necessarily follows that these actions belong also to the body as to their instrument. It was, therefore, altogether suitable that the body should share with the soul the due rewards of eternal glory or punishment. But this can only be accomplished by means of a general resurrection and of a general judgment.

Next, it is important to prove that in prosperity and adversity, which are sometimes the promiscuous lot of the good and of the bad, everything is done and ordered by an all-wise and all-just Providence. It was, therefore, necessary not only that rewards should await the just and punishments the wicked, in the life to come, but that they should be awarded by a public and general judgment. Thus they will become better known and will be rendered more conspicuous to all; and in atonement for the unwarranted murmurings, to which on seeing the wicked abound in wealth and flourish in honours even the Saints themselves, as men, have sometimes given expression, a tribute of praise will be offered by all to the justice and Providence of God. My feet, says the Prophet, were almost moved, my steps had well nigh slipped, because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners; and a little after: Behold! these are sinners and yet abounding in the world, they have obtained riches; and I said, Then have I in vain justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent; and I have been scourged all the day, and my chastisement hath been in the morning. This has been the frequent complaint of

many, and a general judgment is therefore necessary, lest perhaps men may be tempted to say that God walketh about the poles of heaven, and regards not the earth.

This Truth has Rightly been made an Article of the Creed

Wisely, therefore, has this truth been made one of the twelve Articles of the Christian Creed, so that should any begin to waver in mind concerning the Providence and justice of God they might be reassured by this doctrine.

Besides, it was right that the just should be encouraged by the hope, the wicked appalled by the terror, of a future judgment; so that knowing the justice of God the former should not be disheartened, while the latter through fear and expectation of eternal punishment might be recalled from the paths of vice. Hence, speaking of the last day, our Lord and Saviour declares that a general judgment will one day take place, and He describes the signs of its approach, that seeing them, we may know that the end of the world is at hand. At His Ascension also, to console His Apostles, overwhelmed with grief at His departure, He sent Angels, who said to them: This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen him going into heaven

Circumstances of the Judgment:

The Judge

That the judgment of the world has been assigned to Christ the Lord, not only as God, but also as man, is declared in Scripture. Although the power of judging is common to all the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, yet it is specially attributed to the Son, because to Him also in a special manner is ascribed wisdom. But that as man, He will judge the world, is taught by our Lord Himself when He says: As the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son also, to have life in himself; and he hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the son of man.

There is a peculiar propriety in Christ the Lord sitting in judgment; for sentence is to be pronounced on mankind, and they are thus enabled to see their Judge with their eyes and hear Him with their ears, and so learn their judgment through the medium of the senses.

Most just is it also that He who was most iniquitously condemned by the judgment of men should Himself be afterwards seen by all men sitting in judgment on all. Hence when the Prince of the Apostles had expounded in the house of Cornelius the chief dogmas of Christianity, and had taught that Christ was suspended from a cross and put to death by the Jews and rose the third day to life, he added: And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that this is he, who was appointed of God, to be the judge of the living and the dead.

Signs Of The General Judgment

The Sacred Scriptures inform us that the general judgment will be preceded by these three principal signs: the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, a falling away from the faith,

and the coming of Antichrist. This gospel of the kingdom, says our Lord, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come. The Apostle also admonishes us that we be not seduced by anyone, as if the day of the Lord were at hand; for unless there come a revolt first, and the man of sin be revealed, the judgement will not come.

The Sentence Of The Just

The form and procedure of this judgment the pastor will easily learn from the prophecies of Daniel, the writings of the Evangelists and the doctrine of the Apostle. The sentence to be pronounced by the judge is here deserving of more than ordinary attention.

Looking with joyful countenance on the just standing on His right, Christ our Redeemer will pronounce sentence on them with the greatest benignity, in these words: Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. That nothing can be conceived more delightful to the ear than these words, we shall understand if we only compare them with the condemnation of the wicked; and call to mind, that by them the just are invited from labor to rest, from the vale of tears to supreme joy, from misery to eternal happiness, the reward of their works of charity.

The Sentence Of The Wicked

Turning next to those who shall stand on His left, He will pour out His justice upon them in these words: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

The first words, depart from me, express the heaviest punishment with which the wicked shall be visited, their eternal banishment from the sight of God, unrelieved by one consolatory hope of ever recovering so great a good. This punishment is called by theologians the pain of loss, because in hell the wicked shall be deprived forever of the light of the vision of God.

The words ye cursed, which follow, increase unutterably their wretched and calamitous condition. If when banished from the divine presence they were deemed worthy to receive some benediction, this would be to them a great source of consolation. But since they can expect nothing of this kind as an alleviation of their misery, the divine justice deservedly pursues them with every species of malediction, once they have been banished.

The next words, into everlasting fire, express another sort of punishment, which is called by theologians the pain of sense, because, like lashes, stripes or other more severe chastisements, among which fire, no doubt, produces the most intense pain, it is felt through the organs of sense. When, moreover, we reflect that this torment is to be eternal, we can see at once that the punishment of the damned includes every kind of suffering.

The concluding words, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, make this still more clear. For since nature has so provided that we feel miseries less when we have companions and sharers in them who can, at least in some measure, assist us by their advice and kindness, what must be the horrible state of the damned who in such calamities can never separate themselves from the companionship of most wicked demons? And yet most justly shall this very sentence be pronounced by our Lord and Saviour on those sinners who neglected all the works of true mercy, who gave neither food to the hungry, nor drink to the thirsty, who refused shelter to the stranger and clothing to the naked, and who would not visit the sick and the imprisoned.

Importance of Instruction on this Article

These are thoughts which the pastor should very often bring to the attention of his people; for the truth which is contained in this Article will, if accepted with faithful dispositions, be most powerful in bridling the evil inclinations of the heart and in withdrawing men from sin. Hence we read in Ecclesiasticus: In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.' And indeed there is scarcely anyone so given over to vice as not to be recalled to virtue by the thought that he must one day render an account before an all-just Judge, not only of all his words and actions, but even of his most secret thoughts, and must suffer punishment according to his deserts.

On the other hand, the just man will be more and more encouraged to lead a good life. Even though his days be passed in poverty, ignominy and suffering, he must be gladdened exceedingly when he looks forward to that day when, the conflicts of this wretched life being over, he shall be declared victorious in the hearing of all men, and shall be admitted into his heavenly country to be crowned with divine honours that shall never fade.

It only remains, then, for the pastor to exhort the faithful to lead holy lives and practice every virtue, that thus they may be enabled to look forward with confidence to the coming of that great day of the Lord -- nay, as becomes children, even to desire it most fervently.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PART ONE: THE PROFESSION OF FAITH
SECTION TWO I. THE CREEDS

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

The Good News: God has sent his Son

422 'But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.'¹ This is 'the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God':² God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own 'beloved Son'.³

423 We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He 'came from God',⁴ 'descended from heaven',⁵ and 'came in the flesh'.⁶ For '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. . . and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.'⁷

424 Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'⁸ On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church.⁹

"To preach. . . the unsearchable riches of Christ"¹⁰

425 The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."¹¹ It and they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. and we are writing this that our joy may be complete.¹²

At the heart of catechesis: Christ

426 "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father. . . who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever."¹³ To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfilment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him."¹⁴ Catechesis aims at putting "people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."¹⁵

427 In catechesis "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God,. . . is taught - everything else is taught with reference to him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. . . Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'"¹⁶

428 Whoever is called "to teach Christ" must first seek "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"; he must suffer "the loss of all things. . ." in order to "gain Christ and be found in him", and "to know him and the power of his resurrection, and (to) share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible (he) may attain the resurrection from the dead".¹⁷

429 From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to "evangelize", and to lead others to the "yes" of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt. To this end, following the order of the Creed, Jesus' principal titles - "Christ", "Son of God", and "Lord" (article 2) - will be presented. the Creed next confesses the chief mysteries of his life - those of his Incarnation (article 3), Paschal mystery (articles 4 and 5) and glorification (articles 6 and 7).

1 Gal 4:4-5.

2 Mk 1:1.

3 Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 1:5, 68.

4 Jn 13:3.

5 Jn 3:13; 6:33.

6 1 Jn 4:2.

7 Jn 1:14,16.

8 Mt 16:16.

9 Cf. Mt 16:18; St. Leo the Great, Sermo 4 3: PL 54,150 - 152; 51,1: PL 54, 309B; 62, 2: PL 54, 350-351; 83, 3: PL 54, 431-432.

10 Eph 3:8.

11 Acts 4:20.

12 1 Jn 1:1-4.

13 CT 5.

14 CT 5.

15 CT 5.

16 CT 6; cf. Jn 7:16.

17 Phil 3:8-11.

ARTICLE 2

"AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD"

I. Jesus

430 Jesus means in Hebrew: "God saves." At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission.¹⁸ Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, "will save his people from their sins".¹⁹ In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.

431 In the history of salvation God was not content to deliver Israel "out of the house of bondage"²⁰ by bringing them out of Egypt. He also saves them from their sin. Because sin is always an offence against God, only he can forgive it.²¹ For this reason Israel, becoming more and more aware of the universality of sin, will no longer be able to seek salvation except by invoking the name of the Redeemer God.²²

432 The name "Jesus" signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation,²³ so that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."²⁴

433 The name of the Saviour God was invoked only once in the year by the high priest in atonement for the sins of Israel, after he had sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies with the sacrificial blood. the mercy seat was the place of God's presence.²⁵ When St. Paul speaks of Jesus whom "God put forward as an expiation by his blood", he means that in Christ's humanity "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."²⁶

434 Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Saviour God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name".²⁷ The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name.²⁸

435 The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words "through our Lord Jesus Christ". the Hail Mary reaches its high point in the words "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." the Eastern prayer of the heart, the Jesus Prayer, says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word "Jesus" on their lips.

¹⁸ Cf. Lk 1:31.

¹⁹ Mt 1:21; cf. 2:7.

²⁰ Dt 5:6.

²¹ Cf. Ps 51:4, 12.

[22](#) Cf. Ps 79:9.

[23](#) Cf. Jn 3:18; Acts 2:21; 5:41; 3 Jn 7; Rom 10:6-13.

[24](#) Acts 4:12; cf. 9:14; Jas 2:7.

[25](#) Cf. Ex 25:22; Lev 16:2,15-16; Num 7:89; Sir 50:20; Heb 9:5,7.

[26](#) Rom 3:25; 2 Cor 5:19.

[27](#) Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28.

[28](#) Cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16.

II. Christ

436 The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, which means "anointed". It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets.²⁹ This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively.³⁰ It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet.³¹ Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet and king.

437 To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: "To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."³² From the beginning he was "the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world", conceived as "holy" in Mary's virginal womb.³³ God called Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", so that Jesus, "who is called Christ", should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic lineage of David.³⁴

438 Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission, "for the name 'Christ' implies 'he who anointed', 'he who was anointed' and 'the very anointing with which he was anointed'. the one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing."³⁵ His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power", "that he might be revealed to Israel"³⁶ as its Messiah. His works and words will manifest him as "the Holy One of God".³⁷

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to Israel.³⁸ Jesus

accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political.³⁹

440 Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴¹ Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross.⁴² Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."⁴³

²⁹ Cf. Ex 29:7; Lev 8:12; 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 16:1, 12-13; I Kings 1:39; 19:16.

³⁰ Cf. Ps 2:2; Acts 4:26-27.

³¹ Cf. Is 11:2; 61:1; Zech 4:14; 6:13; Lk 4:16-21.

³² Lk 2:11.

³³ Jn 10:36; cf. Lk 1:35.

³⁴ Mt 1:20; cf. 1:16; Rom 1:1; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16.

³⁵ St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3,18,3: PG 7/1, 934.

³⁶ Acts 10:38; Jn 1:31.

³⁷ Mk 1:24; Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14.

³⁸ Cf Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15.

³⁹ Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21.

⁴⁰ Cf. Mt 16:16-23.

⁴¹ Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Is 53:10-12.

[42](#) Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43.

[43](#) Acts 2:36.

III. The Only Son of God

441 In the Old Testament, "son of God" is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings.[44](#) It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called "son of God", it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus "son of God", as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this.[45](#)

442 Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God", for Jesus responds solemnly: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."[46](#) Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles..."[47](#) "and in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'"[48](#) From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the centre of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation.[49](#)

443 Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am."[50](#) Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels.[51](#) He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father", except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father'", and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father".[52](#)

444 The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son".[53](#) Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence.[54](#) He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God".[55](#) In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God",[56](#) that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

445 After his Resurrection, Jesus' divine sonship becomes manifest in the power of his glorified humanity. He was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead".[57](#) The apostles can confess: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."[58](#)

[44](#) Cf. Dt 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; Job 1:6; Ex 4:22; Hos 2:1; 11:1; Jer 3:19; Sir 36:11; Wis 18:13; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 82:6.

[45](#) Cf. I Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7; Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47.

[46](#) Mt 16:16-17.

[47](#) Gal 1:15-16.

[48](#) Acts 9:20.

[49](#) Cf. I Th 1:10; Jn 20:31; Mt 16:18.

[50](#) Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62.

[51](#) Cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36.

[52](#) Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17.

[53](#) Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5.

[54](#) Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36.

[55](#) Jn 3:18.

[56](#) Mk 15:39.

[57](#) Rom 1:3; cf. Acts 13:33.

[58](#) Jn 1:14.

IV. Lord

446 In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name YHWH, by which God revealed himself to Moses,^{[59](#)} is rendered as Kyrios, "Lord". From then on, "Lord" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "Lord" both for the Father and - what is new - for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself.^{[60](#)}

447 Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of Psalm 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles.⁶¹ Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

448 Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as "Lord". This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing.⁶² At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "Lord" expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus.⁶³ In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: "My Lord and my God!" It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: "It is the Lord!"⁶⁴

449 By attributing to Jesus the divine title "Lord", the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honour and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because "he was in the form of God",⁶⁵ and the Father manifested the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting him into his glory.⁶⁶

450 From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not "the Lord".⁶⁷ "The Church. . . believes that the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master."⁶⁸

451 Christian prayer is characterized by the title "Lord", whether in the invitation to prayer ("The Lord be with you"), its conclusion ("through Christ our Lord") or the exclamation full of trust and hope: Maranatha ("Our Lord, come!") or Maranatha ("Come, Lord!") - "Amen Come Lord Jesus!"⁶⁹

⁵⁹ Cf. Ex 3:14.

⁶⁰ Cf. I Cor 2:8.

⁶¹ Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13.

⁶² Cf Mt 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; et al.

⁶³ Cf. Lk 1:43; 2:11.

⁶⁴ Jn 20:28, 21:7.

⁶⁵ Cf. Acts 2:34 - 36; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Rev 5:13; Phil 2:6.

[66](#) Cf. Rom 10:9; I Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11.

[67](#) Cf. Rev 11:15; Mk 12:17; Acts 5:29.

[68](#) GS 10 # 3; Cf. 45 # 2.

[69](#) I Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20.

IN BRIEF

452 The name Jesus means "God saves". the child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21): "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

453 The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (Lk 7:19), the object of "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).

454 The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf Jn 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf Acts 8:37; 1 Jn 2:23).

455 The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (I Cor 12:3).

Article 3

"HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

Paragraph 1. THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN

I. WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

456 With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

457 The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world", and "he was revealed to take away sins":⁷⁰

Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Saviour; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?⁷¹

458 The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."⁷² "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."⁷³

459 The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."⁷⁴ On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!"⁷⁵ Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you."⁷⁶ This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example.⁷⁷

460 The Word became flesh to make us "partakers of the divine nature":⁷⁸ "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."⁷⁹ "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God."⁸⁰ "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."⁸¹

II. THE INCARNATION

461 Taking up St. John's expression, "The Word became flesh",⁸² 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.⁸³

462 The Letter to the Hebrews refers to the same mystery:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I have come to do your will, O God."⁸⁴

463 Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God."⁸⁵ Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings "the mystery of our religion": "He was manifested in the flesh."⁸⁶

III. TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

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.

465 The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh".⁸⁷ But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. the first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father", and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father.⁸⁸

466 The Nestorian heresy regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's Son. Opposing this heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the third ecumenical council, at Ephesus in 431, confessed "that the Word, uniting to himself in his person the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man."⁸⁹ Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it and made it his own, from his conception. For this reason the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb: "Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh."⁹⁰

467 The Monophysites affirmed that the human nature had ceased to exist as such in Christ when the divine person of God's Son assumed it. Faced with this heresy, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, confessed:

Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin". He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.⁹¹

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division or separation. the distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis.⁹²

468 After the Council of Chalcedon, some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople in 553, confessed that "there is but one hypostasis [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity."⁹³ Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: "He who was crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity."⁹⁴

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: "What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed", sings the Roman Liturgy.⁹⁵ and the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: "O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!"⁹⁶

IV. HOW IS THE SON OF GOD MAN?

470 Because "human nature was assumed, not absorbed",⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸

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.⁹⁹

Christ's soul and his human knowledge

471 Apollinarius of Laodicea asserted that in Christ the divine Word had replaced the soul or spirit. Against this error the Church confessed that the eternal Son also assumed a rational, human soul.¹⁰⁰

472 This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man",¹⁰¹ and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience.¹⁰² This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking "the form of a slave".¹⁰³

473 But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person.¹⁰⁴ "The human nature of God's Son, not by itself but by its union with the Word, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God."¹⁰⁵ Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father.¹⁰⁶ The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.¹⁰⁷

474 By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal.¹⁰⁸ What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.¹⁰⁹

Christ's human will

475 Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation.¹¹⁰ Christ's human will "does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will."¹¹¹

Christ's true body

476 Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity, Christ's body was finite.¹¹² Therefore the human face of Jesus can be portrayed; at the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea II in 787) the Church recognized its representation in holy images to be legitimate.¹¹³

477 At the same time the Church has always acknowledged that in the body of Jesus "we see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see."¹¹⁴ The individual characteristics of Christ's body express the divine person of God's Son. He has made the features of his human body his own, to the point that they can be venerated when portrayed in a holy image, for the believer "who venerates the icon is venerating in it the person of the one depicted".¹¹⁵

The heart of the Incarnate Word

478 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God. . . loved me and gave himself for me."¹¹⁶ He has

loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation,¹¹⁷ "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that. . . love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.¹¹⁸

IN BRIEF

479 At the time appointed by God, the only Son of the Father, the eternal Word, that is, the Word and substantial Image of the Father, became incarnate; without losing his divine nature he has assumed human nature.

480 Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men.

481 Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son.

482 Christ, being true God and true man, has a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to his divine intellect and divine will, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

483 The Incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word.

70 I Jn 4:10; 4:14; 3:5.

71 St. Gregory of Nyssa, Orat. catech 15: PG 45, 48B.

72 I Jn 4:9.

73 Jn 3:16.

74 Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6.

75 Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5.

76 Jn 15:12.

77 Cf. Mk 8:34.

[78](#) 2 Pt 1:4.

[79](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939.

[80](#) St. Athanasius, De inc. 54, 3: PG 25, 192B.

[81](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusc. 57, 1-4.

[82](#) Jn 1:14.

[83](#) Phil 2:5-8; cf. LH, Saturday, Canticle at Evening Prayer.

[84](#) Heb 10:5-7, citing Ps 40:6-8 (7-9 LXX).

[85](#) I Jn 4:2.

[86](#) 1 Tim 3:16.

[87](#) Cf. I Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7.

[88](#) Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126.

[89](#) Council of Ephesus (431): DS 250.

[90](#) Council of Ephesus: DS 251.

[91](#) Council of Chalcedon (451): DS 301; cf. Heb 4:15.

[92](#) Council of Chalcedon: DS 302.

[93](#) Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 424.

[94](#) Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 432; cf. DS 424; Council of Ephesus, DS 255.

[95](#) LH, 1 January, Antiphon for Morning Prayer; cf. St. Leo the Great, Sermo in nat. Dom. 1, 2; PL 54, 191-192.

96 Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Troparion O monogenes.

97 GS 22 # 2.

98 Cf. Jn 14:9-10.

99 GS 22 # 2.

100 Cf. Damasus 1: DS 149.

101 Lk 2:52.

102 Cf. Mk 6 38; 8 27; Jn 11:34; etc.

103 Phil 2:7.

104 Cf. St. Gregory the Great, "Sicut aqua" ad Eulogium, Epist. Lib. 10, 39 PL 77, 1097 Aff.; DS 475.

105 St. Maximus the Confessor, Qu. et dub. 66 PG 90, 840A.

106 Cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 8:55; etc.

107 Cf. Mk 2:8; Jn 2 25; 6:61; etc.

108 Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30.

109 Cf. Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7.

110 Cf. Council of Constantinople III (681): DS 556-559.

111 Council of Constantinople III: DS 556.

112 Cf. Council of the Lateran (649): DS 504.

113 Cf. Cal 3:1; cf. Council of Nicaea II (787): DS 600-603.

114 Roman Missal, Preface of Christmas I.

[115](#) Council of Nicaea II: DS 601.

[116](#) Cal 2:20.

[117](#) Cf. Jn 19:34.

[118](#) Pius XII, Enc. Haurietis aquas (1956): DS 3924; cf. DS 3812.

Paragraph 2. "CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY"

I. CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. . .

484 The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates "the fullness of time",^{[119](#)} The time of the fulfilment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the "whole fullness of deity" would dwell "bodily".^{[120](#)} The divine response to her question, "How can this be, since I know not man?", was given by the power of the Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you."^{[121](#)}

485 The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son.^{[122](#)} The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of Life", is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own.

486 The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is "Christ", that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples.^{[123](#)} Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."^{[124](#)}

II.... BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

487 What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.

Mary's predestination

488 "God sent forth his Son", but to prepare a body for him,^{[125](#)} he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary":^{[126](#)}

The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life.¹²⁷

489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living.¹²⁸ By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age.¹²⁹ Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women.¹³⁰ Mary "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established."¹³¹

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role."¹³² The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as "full of grace".¹³³ In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God,¹³⁴ was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.¹³⁵

492 The "splendour of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son".¹³⁶ The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love".¹³⁷

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (Panagia), and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature".¹³⁸ By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

"Let it be done to me according to your word. . ."

494 At the announcement that she would give birth to "the Son of the Most High" without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that "with God nothing will be impossible": "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."¹³⁹ Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary

becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace:¹⁴⁰

As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."¹⁴¹ Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert. . . : "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."¹⁴² Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary "the Mother of the living" and frequently claim: "Death through Eve, life through Mary."¹⁴³

Mary's divine motherhood

495 Called in the Gospels "the mother of Jesus", Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as "the mother of my Lord".¹⁴⁴ In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (Theotokos).¹⁴⁵

Mary's virginity

496 From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived "by the Holy Spirit without human seed".¹⁴⁶ The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says:

You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin,. . . he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate. . . he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen.¹⁴⁷

497 The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility.¹⁴⁸ "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit", said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée.¹⁴⁹ The Church sees here the fulfilment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son."¹⁵⁰

498 People are sometimes troubled by the silence of St. Mark's Gospel and the New Testament Epistles about Jesus' virginal conception. Some might wonder if we were merely dealing with legends or theological constructs not claiming to be history. To this we must respond: Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus met with the lively opposition, mockery or incomprehension of non-believers, Jews and pagans alike;¹⁵¹ so it could hardly have been motivated by pagan mythology or by some adaptation to the ideas of the age. The meaning of this event is accessible only to faith, which understands in it the "connection of these mysteries with one another"¹⁵² in

the totality of Christ's mysteries, from his Incarnation to his Passover. St. Ignatius of Antioch already bears witness to this connection: "Mary's virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord's death escaped the notice of the prince of this world: these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God's silence."¹⁵³

Mary - "ever-virgin"

499 The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man.¹⁵⁴ In fact, Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it."¹⁵⁵ and so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as Aeiparthenos, the "Ever-virgin".¹⁵⁶

500 Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus.¹⁵⁷ The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, "brothers of Jesus", are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls "the other Mary".¹⁵⁸ They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.¹⁵⁹

501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love."¹⁶⁰

Mary's virginal motherhood in God's plan

502 The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in his saving plan wanted his Son to be born of a virgin. These reasons touch both on the person of Christ and his redemptive mission, and on the welcome Mary gave that mission on behalf of all men.

503 Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. "He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures."¹⁶¹

504 Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: "The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven."¹⁶² From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God "gives him the Spirit without measure."¹⁶³ From "his fullness" as the head of redeemed humanity "we have all received, grace upon grace."¹⁶⁴

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?"¹⁶⁵ 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".¹⁶⁶ The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. the spousal

character of the human vocation in relation to God¹⁶⁷ is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood.

506 Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith "unadulterated by any doubt", and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will.¹⁶⁸ It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Saviour: "Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ."¹⁶⁹

507 At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: "the Church indeed. . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse."¹⁷⁰

IN BRIEF

508 *From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. "Full of grace", Mary is "the most excellent fruit of redemption" (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.*

509 *Mary is truly "Mother of God" since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.*

510 *Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St. Augustine, Sermon 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38).*

511 *The Virgin Mary "co-operated through free faith and obedience in human salvation" (LG 56). She uttered her yes "in the name of all human nature" (St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th III, 30, 1). By her obedience she became the new Eve, mother of the living.*

¹¹⁹ Gal 4:4.

¹²⁰ Col 2:9.

¹²¹ Lk 1:34-35 (Greek).

¹²² Cf. Jn 16:14-15.

¹²³ Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:1-12; Lk 1:35; 2:8-20; Jn 1:3 1-34; 2:11.

[124](#) Acts 10:38.

[125](#) Gal 4:4; Heb 10:5.

[126](#) Lk 1:26-27.

[127](#) LG 56; cf. LG 61.

[128](#) Cf. Gen 3:15, 20.

[129](#) Cf. Gen 18:10-14; 21:1-2.

[130](#) Cf. I Cor 1:17; I Sam 1.

[131](#) LG 55.

[132](#) LG 56.

[133](#) Lk 1:28.

[134](#) Lk 1:28.

[135](#) Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus (1854): DS 2803.

[136](#) LG 53, 56.

[137](#) Cf. Eph 1:3-4.

[138](#) LG 56.

[139](#) Lk 1:28-38; cf. Rom 1:5.

[140](#) Cf. LG 56.

[141](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.

[142](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.

143 LC 56; St. Epiphanius, Panarion 2, 78, 18: PG 42, 728CD-729AB; St. Jerome, Ep. 22, 21: PL 22, 408.

144 Lk 1:43; Jn 2:1; 19:25; cf. Mt 13:55; et al.

145 Council of Ephesus (431): DS 251.

146 Council of the Lateran (649): DS 503; cf. DS 10-64.

147 St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Smyrn 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan, 1889), 11/2, 289-293; SCh 10, 154-156; cf. Rom 1:3; Jn 1:13.

148 Mt 1 18-25; Lk 1:26-38.

149 Mt 1:20.

150 Is 7:14 (LXX), quoted in Mt 1:23 (Greek).

151 Cf. St. Justin, Dial. 99, 7: PG 6, 708-709; Origen, Contra Celsum 1, 32, 69: PG 11, 720-721; et al.

152 Dei Filius 4: DS 3016.

153 St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 19, 1: AF 11/2 76-80: cf. I Cor 2:8.

154 Cf. DS 291; 294; 427; 442; 503; 571; 1880.

155 LG 57.

156 Cf. LG 52.

157 Cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3; I Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19.

158 Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56.

159 Cf. Gen 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc.

160 LG 63; cf. Jn 19:26-27; Rom 8:29; Rev 12:17.

[161](#) Council of Friuli (796): DS 619; cf. Lk 2:48-49.

[162](#) I Cor 15:45, 47.

[163](#) Jn 3:34.

[164](#) Jn 1:16; cf. Col 1:18.

[165](#) Lk 1:34; cf. Jn 3:9[ETML:C/].

[166](#) Jn 1:13.

[167](#) Cf. 2 Cor 11:2.

[168](#) LG 63; cf. I Cor 7:34-35.

[169](#) St. Augustine, De virg. 3: PL 40, 398.

[170](#) LG 64; cf. 63.

Paragraph 3. THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST'S LIFE

512 Concerning Christ's life the Creed speaks only about the mysteries of the Incarnation (conception and birth) and Paschal mystery (passion, crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension). It says nothing explicitly about the mysteries of Jesus' hidden or public life, but the articles of faith concerning his Incarnation and Passover do shed light on the whole of his earthly life. "All that Jesus did and taught, from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven",¹⁷¹ is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter.

513 According to circumstances catechesis will make use of all the richness of the mysteries of Jesus. Here it is enough merely to indicate some elements common to all the mysteries of Christ's life (I), in order then to sketch the principal mysteries of Jesus' hidden (II) and public (III) life.

I. CHRIST'S WHOLE LIFE IS MYSTERY

514 Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted.¹⁷² What is written in the Gospels was set down there "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."¹⁷³

515 The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith¹⁷⁴ and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery.¹⁷⁵ His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."¹⁷⁶ His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission

Characteristics common to Jesus' mysteries

516 Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is Revelation of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"¹⁷⁷ Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love. . . among us".¹⁷⁸

517 Christ's whole life is a mystery of redemption. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross,¹⁷⁹ but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life: -already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;¹⁸⁰ - in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;¹⁸¹ - in his word which purifies its hearers;¹⁸² - in his healings and exorcisms by which "he took our infirmities and bore our diseases";¹⁸³ - and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.¹⁸⁴

518 Christ's whole life is a mystery of recapitulation. All Jesus did, said and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation:

When Christ became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of mankind and procured for us a "short cut" to salvation, so that what we had lost in Adam, that is, being in the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus.¹⁸⁵ For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men.¹⁸⁶

Our communion in the mysteries of Jesus

519 All Christ's riches "are for every individual and are everybody's property."¹⁸⁷ Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation "for us men and for our salvation" to his death "for our sins" and Resurrection "for our justification".¹⁸⁸ He is still "our advocate with the Father", who "always lives to make intercession" for us.¹⁸⁹ He remains ever "in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us."¹⁹⁰

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. He is "the perfect man",¹⁹¹ who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.¹⁹²

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."¹⁹³ 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:

We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. . . For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.¹⁹⁴

II. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' INFANCY AND HIDDEN LIFE

The preparations

522 The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant".¹⁹⁵ He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

523 St. John the Baptist is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way.¹⁹⁶ "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last.¹⁹⁷ He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being "the friend of the bridegroom", whom he points out as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".¹⁹⁸ Going before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah", John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.¹⁹⁹

524 When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.²⁰⁰ By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease."²⁰¹

The Christmas mystery

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family.²⁰² Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest.²⁰³ The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal

and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.

The angels and shepherds praise him

and the magi advance with the star,

For you are born for us,

Little Child, God eternal!²⁰⁴

526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom.²⁰⁵ For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God".²⁰⁶ Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.²⁰⁷ Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange":

O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.²⁰⁸

The mysteries of Jesus' infancy

527 Jesus' circumcision, on the eighth day after his birth,²⁰⁹ is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law²¹⁰ and his deputation to Israel's worship, in which he will participate throughout his life. This sign prefigures that "circumcision of Christ" which is Baptism.²¹¹

528 The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Saviour of the world. the great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee.²¹² In the magi, representatives of the neighbouring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. the magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations.²¹³ Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Saviour of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament.²¹⁴ The Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas*²¹⁵ (is made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

529 The presentation of Jesus in the temple shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord.²¹⁶ With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its encounter with the Saviour - the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the "light to the nations" and the "glory of Israel", but also "a sign that is spoken against". the sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had "prepared in the presence of all peoples".

530 The flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents²¹⁷ make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not."²¹⁸ Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him.²¹⁹ Jesus'

departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people.²²⁰

The mysteries of Jesus' hidden life

531 During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labour. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God,²²¹ a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man."²²²

532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfils the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will. . ."²²³ The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.²²⁴

533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus - the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for silence, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us. . . A lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character... A lesson of work. Nazareth, home of the "Carpenter's Son", in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work. . . To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern their brother who is God.²²⁵

534 The finding of Jesus in the temple is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus.²²⁶ Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?"²²⁷ Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary "kept all these things in her heart" during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life.

III. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

The baptism of Jesus

535 Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan.²²⁸ John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins".²²⁹ A crowd of sinners²³⁰ - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes - come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." the Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son."²³¹ This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

536 The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".²³² Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death.²³³ Already he is coming to "fulfil all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins.²³⁴ The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son.²³⁵ The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him".²³⁶ Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened"²³⁷ - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

537 Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. the Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and "walk in newness of life":²³⁸

Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him.²³⁹

Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God.²⁴⁰

Jesus' temptations

538 The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him.²⁴¹ At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him "until an opportune time".²⁴²

539 The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfils Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder.²⁴³ Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.

540 Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.²⁴⁴ This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."²⁴⁵

By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

"The kingdom of God is at hand"

541 "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel.'"²⁴⁶ "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth."²⁴⁷ Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life".²⁴⁸ He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms".²⁴⁹

542 Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the "family of God". By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery - his death on the cross and his Resurrection - he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. "and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Into this union with Christ all men are called.²⁵⁰

The proclamation of the kingdom of God

543 Everyone is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations.²⁵¹ To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word:

The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest.²⁵²

544 The kingdom belongs to the poor and lowly, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor";²⁵³ he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."²⁵⁴ To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned.²⁵⁵ Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation.²⁵⁶ Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.²⁵⁷

545 Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."²⁵⁸ He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents".²⁵⁹ The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins".²⁶⁰

546 Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of parables, a characteristic feature of his teaching.²⁶¹ Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything.²⁶² Words are not

enough, deeds are required.²⁶³ The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word?²⁶⁴ What use has he made of the talents he has received?²⁶⁵ Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven".²⁶⁶ For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic.²⁶⁷

The signs of the kingdom of God

547 Jesus accompanies his words with many "mighty works and wonders and signs", which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah.²⁶⁸

548 The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him.²⁶⁹ To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask.²⁷⁰ So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God.²⁷¹ But his miracles can also be occasions for "offence";²⁷² they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.²⁷³

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death,²⁷⁴ Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below,²⁷⁵ but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage.²⁷⁶

550 The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."²⁷⁷ Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over "the ruler of this world".²⁷⁸ The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: "God reigned from the wood."²⁷⁹

"The keys of the kingdom"

551 From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission.²⁸⁰ He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and 'sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.'²⁸¹ They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁸²

552 Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve;²⁸³ Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."²⁸⁴ Christ, the "living Stone",²⁸⁵ thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.²⁸⁶

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."²⁸⁷ The "power of the keys" designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: "Feed my sheep."²⁸⁸ The power to "bind and loose" connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles²⁸⁹ and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

A foretaste of the kingdom: the Transfiguration

554 From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master "began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised."²⁹⁰ Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he.²⁹¹ In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain,²⁹² before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking "of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem".²⁹³ A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"²⁹⁴

555 For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter's confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to "enter into his glory".²⁹⁵

Moses and Elijah had seen God's glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah's sufferings.²⁹⁶ Christ's Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God's servant;²⁹⁷ The cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. "The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud."²⁹⁸

You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father.²⁹⁹

556 On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection.³⁰⁰ From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. the Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body."³⁰¹ But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God":³⁰²

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be

killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?"³⁰³

Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem

557 "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem."³⁰⁴ By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."³⁰⁵

558 Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"³⁰⁶ When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes."³⁰⁷

Jesus' messianic entrance into Jerusalem

559 How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David".³⁰⁸ Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (Hosanna means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass".³⁰⁹ Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth.³¹⁰ and so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds.³¹¹ Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord",³¹² is taken up by the Church in the Sanctus of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover.

560 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

IN BRIEF

561 "The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfilment of Revelation" John Paul II, CT 9).

562 Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf Gal 4:19). "For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him" (LG 7 # 4).

563 *No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child.*

564 *By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work.*

565 *From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the "Servant", wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by the "baptism" of his Passion.*

566 *The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.*

567 *The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. "This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ" (LG 5). the Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter.*

568 *Christ's Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles' faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent on to the "high mountain" prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27; cf.: St. Leo the Great, Sermo 51, 3: PL 54, 310C).*

569 *Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf Heb 12:3).*

570 *Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifests the coming of the kingdom that the Messiah-King, welcomed into his city by children and the humble of heart, is going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection.*

171

172 Cf. Jn 20:30.

173 Jn 20:31.

174 Cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24.

175 Cf Lk 2:7; Mt 27: 48; Jn 20:7.

176 Col 2:9.

177 Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7, "my beloved Son".

[178](#) Jn 4:9[ETML:C/].

[179](#) Cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 2 Pt 1:18-19.

[180](#) Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

[181](#) Cf. Lk 2:51.

[182](#) Cf. Jn 15:3.

[183](#) Mt 8:17; cf. Is 53:4.

[184](#) Cf. Rom 4:25.

[185](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 18, 1: PG 7/1, 932.

[186](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 18, 7: PG 7/1, 937; cf. 2, 22, 4.

[187](#) John Paul II, RH II.

[188](#) I Cor 15:3; Rom 4:25.

[189](#) I Jn 2:1 Heb 7:25.

[190](#) Heb 9:24.

[191](#) GS 38; cf. Rom 1 5:5; Phil 2:5.

[192](#) Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12.

[193](#) GS 22 # 2.

[194](#) St. John Eudes: LH, week 33, Friday, OR.

[195](#) Heb 9:15.

[196](#) Cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3[ETML:C/].

[197](#) Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13.

[198](#) Jn 1 29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29.

[199](#) Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29.

[200](#) Cf Rev 22:17.

[201](#) Jn 3:30.

[202](#) Cf. Lk 2:61.

[203](#) Cf. Lk 2:8-20.

[204](#) Kontakion of Romanos the Melodist.

[205](#) Cf. Mt 18:3-4.

[206](#) Jn 3 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12.

[207](#) Cf. Gal 4:19.

[208](#) LH, 1 January, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer.

[209](#) Cf. Lk 2:21.

[210](#) Cf. Gal 4:4.

[211](#) Cf. Col 2:11-13.

[212](#) Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon at the Canticle of Mary.

[213](#) Cf Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16.

[214](#) Cf Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6.

215 St. Leo the Great, Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third reading.

216 Cf. Lk 2:22-39; Ex 13:2, 12-13.

217 Cf. Mt 2:13-18.

218 Jn 1:11.

219 Cf. Jn 15:20.

220 Cf. Mt 2:15; Hos 11:1.

221 Cf. Gal 4:4.

222 Lk 2:51-52.

223 Lk 22:42.

224 Cf. Rom 5:19.

225 Paul VI at Nazareth, 5 January 1964: LH, Feast of the Holy Family, OR.

226 Cf. Lk 2:41-52.

227 Lk 2:49 alt.

228 Cf. Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22.

229 Lk 3:3[ETML:C/].

230 Cf. Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7; 21:32.

231 Mt 3:13-17.

232 Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12.

[233](#) Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50.

[234](#) Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39.

[235](#) Cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1.

[236](#) Jn 1:32-33; cf. Is 11:2.

[237](#) Mt 3:16.

[238](#) Rom 6:4.

[239](#) St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 40, 9: PG 36, 369.

[240](#) St. Hilary of Poitiers, In Matth. 2, 5: PL 9, 927.

[241](#) Cf. Mk 1:12-13.

[242](#) Lk 4:13.

[243](#) Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27

[244](#) Cf Mt 16:2 1-23.

[245](#) Heb 4:15.

[246](#) Mk 1:14-15.

[247](#) LG 3.

[248](#) LG 2.

[249](#) LG 5.

[250](#) Jn 12:32; cf. LG 3.

[251](#) Cf. Mt 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19.

[252](#) Lc 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32.

[253](#) Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22.

[254](#) Mt 5:3[ETML:C/].

[255](#) Cf. Mt 11:25.

[256](#) Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6 1; 19:28; Lk 9:58.

[257](#) Cf. Mt 25:31-46.

[258](#) Mk 2:17; cf. I Tim 1:15.

[259](#) Lk 15:7; cf. 7:11-32.

[260](#) Mt 26:28.

[261](#) Cf. Mk 4:33-34.

[262](#) Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14.

[263](#) Cf. Mt 21:28-32.

[264](#) Cf. Mt 13:3-9.

[265](#) Cf. Mt 25:14-30.

[266](#) Mt 13:11.

[267](#) Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15.

[268](#) Acts 2:22; cf. Lk 7:18-23.

[269](#) cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 38.

[270](#) Cf. Mk 5:25-34; 10:52; etc.

[271](#) Cf. Jn 10:31-38.

[272](#) Mt 11:6.

[273](#) Cf. Jn 11:47-48; Mk 3:22.

[274](#) Cf. Jn 6:5-15; Lk 19:8; Mt 11:5.

[275](#) Cf. Lk 12 13-14; Jn 18:36.

[276](#) Cf. Jn 8:34-36.

[277](#) Mt 12:26, 28.

[278](#) Jn 12:31; cf. Lk 8:26-39.

[279](#) LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn Vexilla Regis: Regnavit a ligno Deus.

[280](#) Cf. Mk 3:13-19.

[281](#) Lk 9:2[ETML:C/].

[282](#) Lk 22:29-30.

[283](#) Cf Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; I Cor 15:5.

[284](#) Mt 16:18.

[285](#) I Pt 2:4.

[286](#) Cf. Lk 22:32.

[287](#) Mt 16:19.

[288](#) Jn 21:15-17; Cf. 10:11.

289 Cf. Mt 18:18.

290 Mt 16:21.

291 Cf. Mt 16:22-23; 17:23; Lk 9:45.

292 Cf. Mt 17:1-8 and parallels; 2 Pt 1:16-18.

293 Lk 9:31.

294 Lk 9:35.

295 Lk 24:26.

296 Cf. Lk 24:27.

297 Cf. Is 42:1.

298 St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 45, 4, ad 2.

299 Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Transfiguration, Kontakion.

300 St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 45, 4, ad 2.

301 Phil 3:21.

302 ⇒ Acts 14:22.

303 St. Augustine, Sermo 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33.

304 Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1.

305 Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34.

306 Mt 23:37.

307 Lk 19:41-42.

308 Lk 1:32; cf. Mt 21:1-11; Jn 6:15.

309 Ps 24:7-10; Zech 9:9.

310 Cf. Jn 18:37.

311 Cf. Mt 21:15-16; cf. Ps 8:3; Lk 19:38; 2:14.

312 Cf. Ps 118:26.