

“He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary” Catechism 456-534

Review

- God: Three in One, One in Three—an Eternal Communion of Self-giving Love & Life.
- Creation: The Dynamic Refulgence of God.
- Man in *Imago Dei* Destined for Communion in Love Himself.
- Fall: Man Diminished & Destined for Death.
- The New Adam: “It is only in the Mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of *man* truly becomes clear” (GS, 22).

Today

Systematic theological understanding on the Mystery of the Word made flesh & on the Mysteries of the Hidden Life (Christmas).

Next weeks:

on Mysteries of the Public Life (Baptism, Transfiguration);
on the Great Mystery (Paschal Mystery: Triduum, Easter, Ascension);
on the Mystery of the Church, the Holy Spirit’s extension of the Incarnation and the first stage in our communion in Love Himself (Pentecost).

Hint: A Catholic mind thinks of all life *liturgically*—we are the priests of Creation.

“Awareness of sacred time surely marks one of the profound differences between a Christian and a secularized person today” -Msgr. Peter Elliott, Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002), 1.



Today’s Outline:

Purpose?
The event.
The reality.
How so?
The key witness.
First considerations of the New Adam.

- I. Preface: Why the Incarnation? (456-460)
- II. The Incarnation: God the Word becomes Man (461-463)
- III. He is True God and True Man: The judgement of faith (464-469)
- IV. How so? Faith seeking understanding (*fides quarrens intellectum*) (470-483)
- V. Mary, Part I: The embodiment of faith, Dawn of the “Sonrise” (484-511)
- VI. The Mysteries of Christ’s Life
 - A. On “mystery” and “mysteries” (512-521) [God, Three in One, One in Three. (Creation & Fall). Incarnation. Paschal Mystery. Divinization of Man. Glory]
 - B. Mysteries of the Hidden Life (522-534)



I. Preface: Why did the Word become flesh? (456-460) “final cause”

1. “to save us by reconciling us with God” (457)
2. “that we might know God’s love” (458)
3. “to be our model of holiness [God-likeness]” (459)
4. “to make us partakers of the divine nature”—divinization / deification / *theosis* (460).
A marvelous exchange (cf. 526): “God became man that man might become God.”

See 221, 257, **260**, 294, 356, 375, 398, 504-505, 518, **521**, **526**, 690, 733-736, 760, 772, 787-795, **850**, 1265, 1391, 1720-1726, **1803**, **1988**, 1996-1997, **2548-2550**
[cf. text of *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*]

Like begets like, like marries like, truest friendship is between equals: *theosis* = God re-creating us by redemption by the 2nd Adam (the Son) and sanctification of the Spirit, raising us up that we might gaze on Him face to Face, transforming us so as to love as He loves, to give self and so to possess God Himself: Beatitude, Blessing.

See: Daniel A. Keating. Deification and Grace. Naples, FL: Ave Maria, 2007.

II. The EVENT: The Incarnation: God the Word becomes Man

“assumes human nature” (461-463)...in order to accomplish our salvation in it: God empties Himself to raise us up.

- Paul to Philippians 2:5-8 = Hymn on the *kenosis* of the Word
See: *Benedict XVI, General Audience, Oct 22, 2008 “On Paul’s Christology” on **Divinization***
- Hebrews 10:5-7, citing Psalm 40:6-8 ([7-9] LXX)
describing Jesus at the synagogue (cf. Luke 4:14-21 & Isaiah 61:1-2): “I have told the glad news of deliverance...” “The Spirit is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives...the year of the Lord’s favor”

“a body you have prepared for me” [Greek] = “you have given me an open ear” [Hebrew]

463 “Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is **the distinctive sign of the Christian faith**”
(cf. Letters of John)



An overview of early controversies and decisions: the first seven ecumenical councils.

III. The REALITY in the EVENT: He is True God and True Man:

The judgment of faith—“Amen! It is so!” (464-469)

The issue (464)

The Trinitarian Controversy & Trinitarian Solution:

Error on one side...

The Catholic Center

Error on the other side...

PAUL OF SAMOSATA (adoptionists)
TRI-THEISTS

Apostolic Faith

DOCETISTS (Jesus *appears* human...)

ARIUS & ARIANS (subordinationists)
 (“There was when the Word was not”)
 (The Word is God by adoption/ creation)

I. Nicaea I (325)
 (St. Athanasius)

SABELLIANS (modalists: Father, Son, Spirit
 are modes / appearances of God)

II. Constantinople I (381)

Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (Nicene Creed):

Son is “begotten, not made” “one in being (*homo-ousios*, consubstantial, of one substance) with the Father”;
 God is one *ousia* (nature, substance, essence) and three *hypostases* (persons, *prosopons*).

The Christological Controversy & Incarnational Solution:

NESTORIUS & NESTORIANS

(2 natures in Christ, therefore 2 persons)
("mechanical" union)

APOLLINARIANS

(1 person in Christ, therefore 1 nature)
(only Divine soul & will, a co-mingling)

III. Ephesus (431)

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

Mary *Theotokos* (God-bearer, Mother of God)

IV. Chalcedon (451)

MONOPHYSITES (divine nature in Jesus
overcomes & supplants human nature)

Tome (letter) of Pope St. Leo the Great,

Chalcedonian Definition (cf. CCC 467):

Jesus is the Only-Begotten Lord, one Divine Person (*hypostasis, prosopon*) with two distinct and complete natures, human & divine = "the **hypostatic union**" (the union of the two in the Divine Person).

One person (divine, the Son), **two natures** (divine & human, consubstantial with Father via eternal generation & consubstantial with human nature via Mary, respectively).

V. Constantinople II (553)

The Divine Person of Christ is the subject of all that he did and suffered in the flesh.

"What is not assumed is not saved" (the Word must possess full human nature in order to save man fully).

"Communication of idioms" (e.g. on the cross God died in the flesh—the Son, not the Father).

IV. How so? Faith seeking understanding (*fides quarrens intellectum*) (470-483)**VI. Constantinople III (681)**

MONOTHELITES (divine will in
Jesus supplants human will)

Christ has two wills, human & divine; the human perfectly & freely submits to the divine.

"Human nature is assumed, not absorbed."

Christ has a human rational soul.

VI. Nicaea II (781)

ICONOCLASTS ("image breakers")

Since the Word became Flesh, sacred images (icons) are not idolatry

but are means of affirming the Incarnation and adoring the Person depicted.

"We see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see"

- The Sacred Heart of Jesus = *the* Icon of the Son's love for Father and for us (478)

V. The Key Witness: Mary, Part I: The embodiment of faith, Dawn of the "Sonrise" (484-511)

- Mary Part II (721-726): Mary and the Holy Spirit: Docile Vessel of the Spirit
- Mary Part III (963-975): Mary and the Church: Type of the Church, Mother of Grace, Spouse of Christ

The Key Principles with regard to Mary:

- All that Mary is and does is by the power of the Holy Spirit (484-486) (cf. Mary Part II).
- "What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is base on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ" (487) => "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5)
- "Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it" (964) (cf. 963, Mary Part III).

Mary Part I (summary of 484-511):

● **The Annunciation** = “**the fullness of time**” (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10; Mark 1:14-15), the Center of History: Eternity enters time, Creator submits to creation, “what heaven could not contain is this day born in a manger” (cf. 422).

n.b. March 25: New Year’s Day, the Dawn of the New Creation, Frodo throws the Ring into the Fire...

- **By the power of the Holy Spirit**, the Word is conceived / assumes human nature of Mary...
- ...who is prepared and predestined by God, by his prevenient grace...
- ...and thus is herself **conceived immaculately** without Original Sin and is therefore infused with / clothed with the glory of that habitual sanctifying grace (justified)...
- ...so as to be *truly free to co-operate obediently* with the movement of actual grace (“The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by faith” (St. Irenaeus †c. 200, cited in 494))...
- ...so as to become the source of human nature for the Word and, thereby, **Theotokos, Mother of God**...
- ...who is at the same time by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s fecundity (not fallen man’s), **Virgin**...
- ...**Ever Virgin** (ante-partum, *in partu*, post-partum)...
- ...so as to be the spotless, complete self-gift of the **New Eve** by spousal union with the New Adam, whose humanity is entirely grace-filled and grace-conveying, thereby giving birth to a New Humanity that participates in His Divine Life...
- ...and thus Mary becomes Mother of all the living, **Mother of Grace, Mother of the Church, Model of Disciples** in faith, **Type** (pattern, icon) **of the Church**, and dawn, pre-figurement, and **first instance of the glorious destiny of the Church** (507, 963ff).

n.b. Though without sin, Mary still needs to enter the Blessing of Beatitude, for she is entirely creature. (And though she does not at once fully comprehend the Mystery, she is the Perfect Model of contemplating the Mystery). She is without sin AND is redeemed by the power of the One who is Incarnate by her “fiat,” her “yes”: she partakes from the moment of her conception in the fruit of the redemption yet to be won in time through her Son. She is thus entirely dependent upon His saving work (491,494, 508). In the Mystery of Mary, we encounter the Mystery of God-without-limit, God-beyond-time, to save us in time (498). The Holy Spirit’s action knows no bounds.

n.b. “Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ” (St. Augustine, cited in 506)

VI. First Considerations: The Mysteries of Christ’s Life (512-534)

A. On “mystery” and “mysteries” (512-521) [God, Three in One, One in Three. (Creation & Fall). Incarnation. Paschal Mystery. Divinization of Man]

- “Mystery” = *mysterium* (*mysterion*) = *sacramentum*
- “All that Jesus did and taught...is to be seen **in the light of the mysteries** of Christmas and Easter” (512)
- “His deeds, miracles, and words all revealed that ‘in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.’ His humanity appeared as a ‘**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” (515).

In other words, Christ’s whole earthly life is **Revelation of the Father** and is a “mystery of **redemption**” (516, 517). *Sacrament reveals and conveys life, grace.*

- Christ's whole life is a **mystery of recapitulation**, i.e., the whole history of fallen Man is taken up (recapitulated) in Christ in order that He might restore the True Image and Likeness.

"What is not assumed is not saved." Therefore:

- 1) Jesus is perfect **Model of Man** ("I'm only human" = "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect") = *Gaudium et Spes*, 22 "It is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man fully becomes clear." (520)
- 2) Jesus **fully participates in man and allows us to participate in Him**: all dimensions of human life are recapitulated (taken up in) Jesus, and **Jesus' redemptive work by living those dimensions is conveyed to us by our communion in Him** (521).
Cf. writings of Fr. John Saward on the mysteries of Advent (the womb), of the Incarnation (the cradle), of the Way of the Lamb (childhood), of March (Annunciation to Paschal Mystery), etc.
Cf. *Mysteries of Christianity* by Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888)

B. Mysteries of the Hidden Life (522-534)

- The Old Covenant dispensation (the Exodus, tabernacle, Law, temple, sacrificial system, priesthood, kingship, prophetic office, etc.) all prepare for and converge on Christ...
...who is heralded by the Best Man, the culmination of the prophets, John the Baptist...
...which is all liturgically lived in the season of Advent...
...that in turn prepares us for the 2nd Coming.
- "*Et Verbum caro factum est*" (And the Word was made flesh...). "O marvelous exchange!"
[The midnight Mass proclamation of the Birth of Christ]
- The Mysteries of the Infancy:
 - circumcision: submission to the Law...prefiguration of true circumcision of the heart in baptism
 - *Epi-phanos*: manifestation to the Gentiles and inauguration of the New Covenant through
 - a. adoration of the men of the East (Magi)...prefiguration of the Light to the Nations and the Birth of the Church at Pentecost...
 - b. wedding feast at Cana...prefiguration of the True Marriage between God and Man, the Wine of the New Covenant to be poured out abundantly in the Eucharistic gift of God's Self...
 - c. Jesus' baptism by John...conveyance through the Spirit of the saving power to the waters...
 - presentation in the Temple: the showing of the Firstborn Son, the long-awaited encounter.
Simeon: to see is to possess "Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace, for my eyes have seen..."
 - flight to Egypt: suffering...that bears fruit for the nations
- Mysteries of the Hidden Life:
 - obedience, work, silence, family life...the gradual redemption of quotidian life, preparation for Mission, restoration by obedience what was lost through disobedience...
 - finding in the Temple: "I only do what the Father tells me" (John 5, John 12)



Envoi: How to enter the Mysteries: in the School of Mary, a life of contemplation to "keep all these things in her heart" that they may bear fruit and issue in Love. We love what we know, we seek to know the One we love. **See text of Christmas Proclamation**