

Ten After Ten – Session 25: 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.

513 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.

515 The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith 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... 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.

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.

517 Christ’s whole life is a mystery of redemption. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross, 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;

—in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;

—in his word which purifies its hearers;

—in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”;

—and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.

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... For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men.

519 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... He remains ever in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us.

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. He is “the perfect man,” 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.

521 Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us... 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:

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 (St. John Eudes)