

# Jesus Christ, the Only Son of God

*Truly God and truly man, Jesus Christ stands at the center of human history*

BY BISHOP WILLIAM E. LORI, SUPREME CHAPLAIN

First and foremost, the Advent and Christmas seasons intensify the Church's constant proclamation of Good News for the entire human family: Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, was born of the Virgin Mary in the power of the Holy Spirit for our redemption and the redemption of the world. The proclamation of the name of Christ and his saving deeds is the heart of the Gospel.

But who is Jesus Christ? We remember Jesus' question: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" (Mt 16:13-15). After various opinions were mentioned, it was Peter who confessed the astounding truth: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" On this confession the entire life and mission of the Church is built. Our faith in Christ should instill in us a desire to share the Good News with all those we meet — "to reveal in the Person of Christ the entire design of God and to put humanity in communion with him" (*Compendium*, 80).

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The angel of God told Mary and Joseph to name the Child "Jesus" — which means "God saves" — "because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21, cf. Lk 1:31). Jesus' name is itself a proclamation of his unique identity and saving mission as seen from the perspective of our need for salvation; in no other name can we find salvation (see Acts 4:12). That is why we are never to take Jesus' name in vain.

Jesus is also called the "Christ." This is not a family name, but rather a Greek term meaning the "anointed

one" or "Messiah." Jesus is the long-awaited Savior sent from the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit (see Lk 3:21). Through baptism we become members of the Church and heirs to all that the Lord did to save us by his life, death and resurrection, in obedience to the Father's will.

Jesus has a unique and perfect relationship with the Father. While we are adopted sons and daughters of the Father in Christ, only Jesus is God's Son from all eternity, the second Person of the Trinity. Both Jesus' baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist and his Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor were marked by the overshadowing Spirit and the voice of the Father: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (see Mt 3:16, 11:27).

Another very important title of Jesus is "Lord," referring to Jesus' "divine sovereignty," which he demonstrated by his miracles, his control over the forces of nature and his forgiveness of sins. St. Paul teaches, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3) and includes in his Letter to the Philippians an early confession of faith: "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). Just as the Church's liturgy constantly addresses Jesus as Lord, we should never let a day go by without reverently addressing Christ, as did Thomas the Apostle: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

## FULLY GOD, FULLY MAN

Why did God the Father send his Son into the world? Was there no other way to save us? Theologians have longed discussed that question, but the fact remains: Although Jesus was God's Son from all eternity, at a point in time some 2,000 years ago, he assumed our human nature and entered history. This happened because God wanted to draw near to

us, to reconcile us to his love and to enable us to share his life.

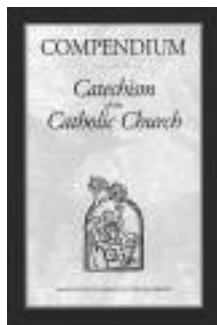
Jesus is "true God and true man" — "of one substance," "consubstantial" with the Father and at the same time, truly our brother. This central truth of our faith was authoritatively summarized and taught by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. It proclaimed that Jesus is a divine Person, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, with two natures, divine and human. This does not mean that Jesus is "half God" and "half man," but rather fully God and fully man. As man he revealed the Father to us and, at the same time, revealed us to ourselves — who we are and what we should become (see *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). As God, he made us partakers in the divine nature, in the life and love he shared with his Father from all eternity.

Jesus' two natures, without becoming confused, work together. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "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" (89). That is why, when Jesus speaks and acts in the Gospels, a wisdom, power and love emerge which baffles his followers and his enemies alike.

The Incarnation was real. The Son of God truly did assume "a body animated by a rational human soul" (90). As the Second Vatican Council teaches, "He worked with human hands and thought with a human mind" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). In doing so, Jesus learned many things the way we do: by experience. But as God he knew the Father "intimately and immediately." Jesus was aware of the plan of God the Father, which he had come to fulfill. He also knew the inmost thoughts of others.

Moreover, Jesus possessed both a human will and a divine will. We all know how easy it is for our will to go awry, to know what we should do but to do something else instead. As we struggle with our fallen nature, here is a

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The tenth installment of Supreme Chaplain Bishop William E. Lori's faith formation program addresses questions 79-97 of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Previous articles are archived at [www.kofc.org](http://www.kofc.org).

beautiful truth for us to reflect on: As the Son of God made man, Jesus willed in a human way all that the Trinity had decided on to bring about our salvation. The human will of Christ was fully conformed to the Father's saving love. In his will we find the pattern for the obedience that should be ours as bap-

tized sons and daughters of the Father. What is more, we have access to Christ's obedient love through the Mass and sacraments. Jesus' obedience serves to heal our disobedience and its effects.

And not only did Jesus humanly know and follow what he learned from his heavenly Father; with his human

heart, he also knows and loves us. For that reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbolizes the boundless love of the Trinity for us.

Perhaps this is a good place to end. But it is also the beginning — the inexhaustible foundation of our life in Christ. ■

## DISCUSSION/REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL USE

1. What ought our response be to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" What implication does this response have on sharing the Gospel?
2. What do the names "Jesus," "Christ," and "Lord" indicate about Jesus' identity and mission?
3. Jesus' primary identity is that of Son, in his unique and perfect relationship with God the Father. What does it mean

to say that Jesus is the "only Son of God," and how does his Sonship relate to our adoption into God's family?

4. What is the significance of the Incarnation with regard to our faith? Why is it important to hold that Jesus is both fully God and fully man?
5. *Gaudium et Spes* 22 says, "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light." What does Jesus' humanity teach us about ourselves? What does it reveal about God?

## PASTORAL RESOURCES

"Light up for Christ" (Tuesday, Dec. 2) is a program involving blessing services and other activities to let the joy of Christmas shine around

the world. Knights of Columbus units are invited to turn on a switch and light a nativity scene and/or Christmas tree at 8 p.m. (local time). See the *Book of Blessings* for the Order of Blessing a Christmas Tree or the Order for the Blessing of a Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene.

### The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Monday, Dec. 8)

**Our Lady of Guadalupe (Wednesday, Dec. 12)** is patroness of the Americas, the Knights of Columbus and the pro-life movement. In August 2009, the Order will be sponsoring its first international Marian Congress, devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Phoenix.

### Nativity of the Lord (Tuesday, Dec. 25)

**The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Sunday, Dec. 28).** This is good day for Knights to celebrate the importance of Christian family life. Also, the time between Christmas and Epiphany (Dec. 26-Jan. 4) is a traditional time to bless the houses of the faithful. See the Order of Blessing of Homes in the *Book of Blessings*.

### ORDER'S MUSEUM FEATURES NATIVITIES OF EUROPE

This Christmas season, the Knights of Columbus Museum presents a fourth international crèche exhibit, Nov. 21-Feb. 1.

Titled *Nativities of Europe*, it features approximately 90 crèches from more than two dozen nations, borrowed from three American collections as well as a vast diorama from Naples, Italy. Visit [www.kofcmuseum.org](http://www.kofcmuseum.org) for more information.



## CHRONOLOGY OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD FATHER MICHAEL J. MCGIVNEY

**Dec. 4, 1881** — Father Michael J. McGivney elected as the financial secretary of the budding Catholic association of men.

**Dec. 8, 1888** — Mother, Mary Lynch McGivney, dies.

**Dec. 15, 1875** — Receives minor orders at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Md.

**Dec. 18, 1997** — Opening of the diocesan process of Father Michael J. McGivney's canonization.

**Dec. 23, 1876** — Ordained a deacon at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Baltimore, Md.

**Dec. 22, 1877** — Ordained a priest at the Cathedral of the Assumption by Archbishop James Gibbons, Baltimore, Md.

**Dec. 25, 1877** — Father McGivney's first solemn Mass at Immaculate Conception Church, Waterbury, Conn.

**Dec. 28, 1881** — Calls a third meeting to further organize a Catholic association of men.

**Dec. 30, 1881** — Funeral of Edward Downes, close friend and strong supporter of Father McGivney's efforts to form a Catholic association of men.

Encourage Knights to join the Father McGivney Guild at [www.fathermcgivney.org](http://www.fathermcgivney.org)

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