

Session 4: INCARNATION

For us men and for our salvation he came down from Heaven

God promised a Saviour. Now the Saviour comes: the Father's only Son is conceived in Mary's womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the divine Son, Jesus Christ, God with us.

Prayer

God our Father, Your Word became man and was born of the Virgin Mary.

May we become more like Jesus Christ whom we acknowledge as our redeemer, God and man. Amen



God's
Promise
takes Flesh
in Mary

Fra Angelico. The Annunciation, 1430-1432. Fresco, Museo del Prado, Madrid. © 2012. Photo SCALA, Florence.

Scripture

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.

(Luke 1: 26-32; 35)



1. Professing the Faith

Activity 1

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read out loud.

- Identify the different events of the Scripture text in the picture.
- Find the Trinity in the picture.

The **Incarnation** is the most important event in the whole of human history: God the Son becomes man: **Jesus Christ**. He does not stop being fully God, yet he takes on our human nature and becomes fully human as we are. He has no sin, for to sin is to be less human, less than God intends for us. God the Son accepts to be everything that we are, without ever ceasing to be everything that he is: God himself, our Creator. Everything depends on him for its existence; yet as man, he makes himself dependant on his family and earns his living. In Jesus, God himself enters human time and space to save us and to re-unite us to himself. He enters history, he enters our lives, so that through him we may fulfil our vocation: to live for him and with him, in the heart of the Holy Trinity. The Saviour of the world comes to us in the most humble and silent way. God comes to serve, and not to be served. He comes to be one with us in the humblest aspects of our human life.

Is Jesus Christ really God? Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father, the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is wholly God, our Saviour. Only God can save us from the power of sin and death.

Is Jesus Christ really man? When the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, becomes man, he takes on the whole of human nature. He does not just appear to be human. He has a human body and human emotions; he has intelligence and a human will. He has a human soul.



3. Living the Faith

What difference does the Incarnation make to us?

Activity 3

Read the passage from the Creed concerning the Incarnation:

I believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (At the words that follow up to and including and became man, all bow) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

- Why does the Church ask us to bow at that moment of the Creed?
- How would you answer people who say that God does not care for us, that God is absent or far away from us, or that God does not know what it is to be human?



2. Celebrating the Mass

After the First Reading, the Psalm and the Second Reading, everyone stands up to hear **the Gospel**. Only the bishop, a priest or a deacon may proclaim the Gospel. This is the most solemn and important moment of the Liturgy of the Word. The 'Gospel' means the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ. The passage read at Mass is taken from one of the Four Gospels, which are found at the beginning of the New Testament. They are accounts of the life and sayings of Jesus Christ, written by the Evangelists: St Matthew, St Mark, St Luke and St John. When we hear the Gospel with an open and attentive heart, we hear Jesus Christ himself speaking to us his beloved ones, his Church. The Gospel contains the message of life and love that God wants to communicate to us. Here is no dead letter or dusty history, but the life-giving Word of God.

Activity 2

Before the Gospel is proclaimed, the Gospel reader (bishop, priest or deacon) traces the sign of the cross on his forehead, lips and breast. Traditionally, the people do the same. Think and discuss what this could mean.

Once the Gospel has been proclaimed, everyone sits down, and the priest or deacon gives a **homily**. The homily helps us to understand the word of God and to act on it. The Gospel we have received is a living and true word which will transform our lives and bear fruit if we are open to it and willing to live it.

On Sundays and solemn feast days, we proclaim the Faith of the whole Church in **the Creed**. This Faith has been handed down to us from the Apostles of Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago. In saying the Creed together, we publicly proclaim that we believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We publicly proclaim that what the Apostles passed on to us through the Church is true: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, God made man, who died and rose again. It is the Holy Spirit who unites us in the Church, as the Body of Jesus Christ. It is from his name that we receive our name: 'Christians'.

After the Creed, we present our bidding prayers, our **intercessions** to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ his beloved Son, through the Holy Spirit. We pray for the needs of the Church and of the whole world.

Through the Incarnation, God gives us the greatest of all gifts, his only Son. God and man are united in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world: through him we can be united with God and share God's own life and happiness.

In Jesus, God gives himself to us. This gift is totally undeserved. We call this gift '**grace**'. Today, Christ gives himself to us, gives grace, through the Sacraments. We receive him freely. All God asks of us is an open, obedient and faithful heart, ready to receive his abundant gifts of life and love. 'By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8). Grace – Christ's own life – is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is through grace that we are able to call God 'our Father'. From the moment of our Baptism, the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. Through his action, we are freely able to imitate Jesus in the way we live and relate to one another. Grace enables us to follow God's law of love: '**love one another as I have loved you.**'



4. Praying with the Church

Think and Pray

In most religions, man strives to draw near to God. In the Christian religion it is the other way around: it is God who draws near to us, nearer than we could ever expect.

- Jesus Christ can be the centre of your life: do you dare invite him into your heart?
- Holy Spirit, show to me the loving face of Jesus!
- In your prayer, entrust each of those for whom you care into the hands of Jesus.

Read and Pray

In the beginning was the Word;

The Word was with God

And the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him.

What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men;

And light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory,

The glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:1-5;14)

Prayer

Together, pray the Our Father.

We can pray to God as 'Our Father' because the Son became one of us, making us children of the Father.

Father, We are filled with new light

By the coming of your Word among us.

May the light of faith shine in our words and actions.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Anchoring your Family in the Faith

Teach your children to make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips and breast as Mass before the Gospel reading, and explain why we do this.

Explain to your children that Jesus is unique: he is God – one of the Trinity - and man.

Read the Apostles Creed together, the summary of the Catholic faith.

Teach your children to see Jesus in every person.

For further reading and prayer

Bible: Isaiah 9:2-7; John 3:11-21; Colossians 1:11-20.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 79-87; 423; 425; 428; 534; 582; 583