

Why did the Son of God become man?

In the Creed, we say “I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...” But why did God the Son become man? Why is he called Jesus Christ? What does the mystery of the Incarnation mean? Does it make sense to venerate pictures and figures of Jesus in the Crib?

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Summary

1. Why did the Son of God become man?

2. What does the name "Jesus Christ" mean?

3. What is the "mystery of the Incarnation"?

4. Why do we pray in front of Nativity scenes and venerate figures of Baby Jesus?

1. Why did the Son of God become man?

In the Creed we say: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, ... and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary."

When our first parents sinned, we lost our friendship with God, and the path to Heaven was shut to us. But God “loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4: 10).

Jesus Christ became flesh for us – became man - in order to save us by reconciling us with God. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn 3: 16). “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” (1 Jn 4: 9). (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 456-459)

Meditate with St. Josemaria

- You must look at the Child in the manger. He is our Love. Look at him, realizing that the whole thing is a mystery. We need to accept this mystery on

faith and use our faith to explore it very deeply. To do this, we must have the humble attitude of a Christian soul. Let us not try to reduce the greatness of God to our own poor ideas and human explanations. Let us try to understand that this mystery, for all its darkness, is a light to guide men's lives. (Christ is Passing By, 13)

- It was divine love which led the second Person of the holy Trinity, the Word, the Son of God the Father, to take on our flesh, our human condition, everything except sin. And the Word, the Word of God, is the Word from which Love proceeds. Love is revealed to us in the Incarnation, the redemptive journey which Jesus Christ made on our earth, culminating in the supreme

sacrifice of the Cross. (*Christ is Passing By*, 162)

- *Iesus Christus, Deus homo*: Jesus Christ, God-man. This is one of “the mighty works of God,” which we should reflect upon and thank him for. He has come to bring “peace on earth to men of good Will,” to all men who want to unite their wills to the holy will of God — not just the rich, not just the poor, but everyone: all the brethren. We are all brothers in Jesus, children of God, brothers of Christ. His Mother is our mother. (*Christ is Passing By*, 13)

2. What does the name "Jesus Christ" mean?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes what Scripture says about the name Jesus. The Angel told the Virgin Mary the name of the baby who would be born by the work of the Holy Spirit: “You shall call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:31), “for he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus means “God saves”; “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“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.” Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed. He was the one “who is to come” (Lk 7:19). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. Acts 8:37; 1 Jn 2:23). (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 430-436, 453-454)

Meditate with St. Josemaria

- Don't be afraid to call our Lord by his name – Jesus – and tell him that you love him. (*The Way*, no. 303)
- How much I savoured the epistle of that day! The Holy Spirit through Saint Paul teaches us the secret of immortality and of Glory. All of us human beings yearn to live on.
- We would wish to make those moments in our lives when we are happy last forever. We would wish the memory of our deeds to be glorified. We would like our cherished ideals to become immortal. And so it is that when we seem to be happy, when something consoles us in our distress, we all naturally say and desire that it should last forever, forever.

- Oh the wisdom of the devil! How well he knew the human heart. “You will be like gods,” he said to our first parents. That was a cruel deception. Saint Paul in this Epistle to the Philippians teaches us a divine secret by which to attain immortality and Glory: Jesus... emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him a name which is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth...
(The Forge, no. 1021)

3. What is the "mystery of the Incarnation"?

“Taking up St. John’s expression, ‘The Word became flesh’ (Jn 1:14), the Church calls ‘Incarnation’ the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it.”

“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. ‘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’.” (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 461-470)

Meditate with St. Josemaria

- When the Blessed Virgin said Yes, freely, to the plans revealed to her by the Creator, the divine Word assumed a human nature: a rational soul and a body, which was formed in the most pure womb of Mary. The divine nature and the human were united in a single Person: Jesus Christ, true God and, thenceforth, true Man; the only-begotten and eternal Son of the Father and, from that moment on, as Man, the true son of Mary. This is why Our Lady is the Mother of the Incarnate Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity who has united our human nature to himself for ever, without any confusion of the two natures. (*Friends of God*, no. 274)
- The greatest praise we can give to the Blessed Virgin is to

address her loud and clear by the name that expresses her very highest dignity: Mother of God. (*Friends of God*, no. 274)

- The Son of God became man, and he is *perfectus Deus*, *perfectus homo*: “perfect God and perfect man.” There is something in this mystery which should stir Christians. I was and am moved. I should like to go back to Loreto. I go there now in thought and desire, to relive those years of Jesus’ childhood and consider once more those words: “Here the Word was made flesh.”
- *Iesus Christus, Deus homo*: Jesus Christ, God-man. This is one of “the mighty works of God,” which we should reflect upon and thank him for. He has come to bring “peace on earth to men of good Will,” to all men who want to unite their wills to the holy will of God — not just the

rich, not just the poor, but everyone: all the brethren. We are all brothers in Jesus, children of God, brothers of Christ. His Mother is our mother. (*Christ is Passing By*, 13)

4. Why do we pray in front of Nativity scenes and venerate figures of Baby Jesus?

“Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity (...) 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.

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 ('a we recognize in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible', Preface of Christmas, Roman Missal). 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.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 476-477)

Meditate with St. Josemaria

- Every time Christmas comes around, I love to look at representations of the child Jesus. Statues and pictures which show a God who lowered himself remind me that God is calling us. The Almighty wants us to know that he is

defenceless, that he needs men's help. From the cradle at Bethlehem, Christ tells you and me that he needs us. He urges us to live a Christian life to the full – a life of self-sacrifice, work and joy. (...) The greatness of this Child who is God! His Father is the God who has made heaven and earth, and there he is, in a manger, "because there was no room at the inn" – there was nowhere else for the Lord of all creation. (*Christ is Passing By*, 18)

- Whenever I preach beside the crib, I try to see Christ our Lord as a child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying on straw in a manger. Even though he is only a child, unable to speak, I see him as a master and a teacher. I need to look at him in this way, because I must learn from him. And to learn from him, you must try to know his life –

reading the Gospel and meditating on the scenes of the New Testament – in order to understand the divine meaning of his life on earth. (*Christ is Passing By*, 14)

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