

Christology
Know Jesus; Know Christ

I. God by the numbers

A. Trinity = Father, Son, Holy Spirit

One (1) divine nature shared by three (3) distinct persons.

All equally: eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent

B. Incarnation = Second Person *becomes* human

One (1) divine person (Word/Son) with two (2) distinct natures.

Divine Nature — loses nothing of its divine attributes and identity

Human Nature = *generated* mind & body, with human intellect & will (soul)
[like every other human soul, created in the image and likeness of God]

Thus: true God and true Man

II. Need for the Incarnation

A. God's love must be perfectly expressed, thus He establishes absolute intimacy with His creatures by becoming one with us.

B. Fallen humanity does not have the ability in itself to re-establish union with God. We cannot reach to God on our own, so God must reach down to us.

C. A human death would be an inadequate sacrifice to rectify humanity's sin. Only God's self-sacrifice for us is adequate to redeem humanity from sin.

D. Only Jesus as the sinless man can be fully obedient to the Will of the Father to prove humanity's love and obedience. He is the model for us all.

III. Jesus = "God saves"

A. Because Jesus is the name given the incarnate Word / Son, (Luke 1:31; Matt 1:21; John 1:14) it identifies the man. Yet, it is true to say "Jesus" is the Second Person of the Trinity because the Incarnation makes the two natures inseparable.

B. Jesus has a *human beginning* because the eternal Son "emptied Himself" (Phil 2:7), and took on our human condition: conception to death. He is "one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

- C. The body, mind, and soul of Jesus *as a man* has to be distinct from his divinity in order to experience the full reality of human life.

☆ Yet, necessarily free from sin, Jesus the man would have experienced the *Beatific Vision*, that is, “knowing God without the veil of sin.” This gave to Jesus the power and grace by which he was able to perform his work of salvation.

IV. Christ = “Anointed”

- A. While God had anointed others, (Moses, David, Isaiah, etc.) Jesus is **the** Christ, the Messiah, the Savior promised to Adam and Eve from the dawn of creation. (Gen 3:15)

- B. “Christ” identifies the role of Jesus in his mission as the Messiah / Savior:

1. **Priest** = the one who offers sacrifice to God for the sake of the people. Also the one who prays and intercedes for the people to God. The sacrifice of Jesus is of course his own life. (Heb 4:14 & 5:1-10)
2. **Prophet** = the one who speaks for God to the people. As God’s Son, Jesus receives knowledge directly from God and passes it on. See God’s command at the Transfiguration, (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). Also, Jesus himself states: “I have told you everything I have heard from my Father,” (John 15:15)
3. **King** = the Law-giver, (Matt 5:17 - 7:29*), Lord, and Judge (Matt 25:31-46 – the separation of sheep and goats), who rules over his kingdom. Of course, it is an heavenly kingdom (John 18:33-37 – Jesus to Pilate)

* In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses a formula: “You have heard . . . But I say to you . . .” Jesus replaces Moses! “He taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes,” (Matt 7:29)

☆ Jesus refers to himself as “the Son of Man,” which from the Old Testament embodies these three roles.

Matt 9:6 - power to forgive sins = priestly role

Matt 12:40 - three days in the earth = priestly self-sacrifice

Matt 13:37 - Son of Man sows good seed = prophet of God’s word

Matt 16:13 - people see “Son of Man” as a prophet (Jeremiah, John the Baptist)

Matt 10:23 - the final judgment = king of life and death

Matt 12:8 - Lord of the sabbath = king

V. Jesus' Knowledge

Quotations from The Catholic Catechism:

- 472 This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man", (Luke 2:52) and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience, (Cf. Mark 6:38; 8:27; John 11:34; etc.). This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking "the form of a slave," (Phil 2:7).
- 473 But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. "The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God." (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Qu. et dub.* 66: PG 90, 840A). Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father, (Cf. Mark 14:36; Matt 11:27; John 1:18; 8:55; etc.). The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts, (Cf. Mark 2:8; John 2:25; 6:61; etc.).
- 474 By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal, (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30). What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal, (Cf. Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7).

VI. Jesus' Life reveals the God-Man

A. Relationship with the Father

For Jesus, the Christ, to complete his mission, he had to have a human relationship with his Father, not merely the eternal union of the Trinity. The elements of the human relationship to God are Faith, Hope, and Love, so Jesus truly possessed these virtues as a human being.

1. **Faith** = *belief in that which is not seen*. Even with the Beatific Vision and full awareness of God's Plan, Jesus also knew his human limitations and thus possesses a *confidence of faith*. Stronger than our truly *blind faith*, Jesus had to *believe* in God's plan, and that he was doing God's will; he acted on behalf of the Father. He expressed his faith in prayer, asking for human strength to perform his mission. (Mark 1:35 - his prayer after healings to prepare for more work.)

2. **Hope** = *trust and dependence on what is promised*. Flowing from faith is hope. While Jesus was confident in his Father, having embraced his own humanity (limitations), Jesus surrendered control and had to trust in the outcome promised by God. Even God allows the free will of human beings to change the course of time! (Mark 14:32-37 - the agony in the garden)
3. **Love** = *valuing the good of another as more important than self*. Faith and hope in his Father leads Jesus to love and thereby to accept God's will as his own. The commitment to a plan that means suffering and death proves that his love is as solid as human love is weak. (John 15:12-14 - to lay down one's life)

B. Baptism

1. Jesus came to John to be baptized, not for the actual forgiveness of sins, but to be "counted among sinners" (Isa 53:12) to fulfill the Scriptures. He had no worry or concern to be thought of as *one of us!*
2. This baptism by immersion into the Jordan River *prefigures* Jesus' death and resurrection and gives sacramental efficacy to Christian baptism: by dying to our sinful self in baptism, we rise to new life in Christ, (Rom 6:1-4).
3. The Father sends the Spirit to confirm Jesus is beginning his mission of salvation, (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22).

C. Temptations

Adam, and every person after him, failed in confrontation of evil and temptation, so Jesus accepts his humanity and does for all people what we are too weak to do: answer Satan, and thus, show us the way. (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13) The three temptations attack the three elements of human nature:

1. The body is tempted through food (bread)
2. The mind is tempted by Satan mockingly telling Jesus to trust God to send angels
3. The soul is tempted by Satan's promise to give Jesus the world if he would worship Satan in place of God.

D. Preaching

Jesus came to proclaim the in-breaking of God's reign, and call people to repentance, (Mark 1:14-15). He says that he speaks what he heard from the Father, (John 17:6-8). Because Jesus listens and obeys, (John 17:4; John 5:19 - does what the Father does), we are shown that we can do the same, (John 3:16-21 - believe and have life).

E. Miracles

The miracles of Jesus show God's divine power and love working for the good of His people. (Mark 1:40-42 - *touching* the leper to heal) Jesus is the instrument of God's blessing, effectively, a human sacrament.

It should be noted that miracles are neither rampant nor casual, but only performed to help people come to believe, (Matt 11:20-24 - Jesus reproaches those who fail to believe). God's help / blessing is not always through a miracle which suspends or reverses the laws of nature, but often through forgiveness.

F. Forgiveness of sins

Another essential element of Jesus' mission is to show the compassion of God in His mercy toward sinners. God does not want people to be punished or suffer (Luke 13:1-5); we bring that on ourselves and each other. (Matt 9:1-8 - forgive and heal the paralytic. John 8:3-11 - does not condemn the woman caught in adultery.)

Please note that it is through the visible, audible, tangible act of a human being that God offers forgiveness of sins. Thus, it is only appropriate that Jesus empowers his Church to continue his ministry of forgiveness. (John 20:21-23 - power to forgive passed on after the resurrection.)

G. Establishment of the Eucharist

"Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end," (John 13:1).

God's love for His people would not allow Him to become Incarnate for a finite period of time and then return to Heaven never to be touched again until the end of time. The Incarnation radically changed creation and even God Himself.

Thus, the Real Presence is Jesus' way to prove God's abiding love and to maintain that active presence with the people he came to save, (Luke 22:14-20). The act of redemption is on-going for each new generation. ("And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age," Matt 28:20.)

H. Passion

The ultimate act of love by Jesus, both for his Father and for his brothers and sisters was to accept the Passion. To be obedient unto death is to fulfill his purpose: to save those who could not save themselves.

1. **Agony:** Jesus experienced a conflict of wills as real as it is for any human person. He did not want to suffer and die, even if he believed and trusted in the ultimate outcome, (Matt 26:36-46). There is a true surrender of his human will to the Father. Just as Jesus' life is a model for all people, so too is the surrender of his will.

2. **Crucifixion:** Jesus, the Christ, Man *and* God, is nailed to the cross. He suffers in the fulness of his divine person and his divine and human natures. But it is only the Second Person of the Trinity who suffered and died, not the Father nor the Spirit. The Second Person (Word/Son) had to experience death because a mere human death would be inadequate expiation for our sins. (Luke 23:33-43 - includes the "good thief")

3. **Death:** The death of Jesus is like every human death, wherein the body and soul are separated from each other, (Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-30). The divine Person did not protect Jesus from death so that it was merely a "pretend" death; that would be a conditional act of love. God loves unconditionally. The divine nature of the Second Person remained both in the human body and human soul.

I. Descent into "Sheol"

While the body of Jesus remained buried in the tomb, the divinely infused human soul of Jesus preached the message of God's love and salvation to those departed souls who never heard the message so they could choose for themselves where to spend eternity. (Cf. John 5:25; also Matt 27:52-53 - tombs opened; *saints* came forth after the resurrection.)

This is not the "hell" of eternal damnation where Satan had already chosen to reside, but the place of waiting for those unable to enter Heaven on their own.

J. Resurrection

Jesus' resurrection required a *transformation* of his body because bone, flesh, and blood, as we know, deteriorate. So his body is "glorified" and exists without the constraints of time and space. Yet it is the real body because it bears the marks of his passion. (Cf. John 20:19-20; Luke 24:15-16 - Emmaus story)

Those Jesus raised from the dead (John 11:1-44 - Lazarus; Luke 7:11-15 - man from Nain; Luke 9:40-56 - Jairus' daughter) only experienced a re-animation, (that is, *the soul joined back to the body*), of their human life, and not yet the eternal resurrection.

We also note that Jesus was *raised* by the Father, (cf. Matt 28:6; Mark 16:5-6; Luke 24:4-7; 1Cor 15:3-4), which is a passive event. Jesus the man could not rise by his own power, (this would be an active event). It is only as the Son in the union of the Trinity that we could say that Jesus raised himself, (cf. John 10:17-18).

K. Ascension

Jesus' ascension completes the physical union of his human nature to his divine transcendence. In the glory of the Resurrection, Jesus still has more to do. He tells Mary Magdalene not to cling to him because he has not ascended yet, (John 20:17). Jesus the man, by the Ascension definitely transcends time and space and creates the physical-spiritual place of Heaven. His human nature is no longer earth-bound but ultimately transformed. (Cf. Mark 16:19; Acts 1:6-12)

L. Final Judgment

Jesus knew he would be coming back as the Judge of the living and the dead. His parables of the Judgment signify this. And he teaches that God has given to him this power to judge, (John 5:21-30). It is only just, by God's plan, that we be judged by one like ourselves. So we await the return of the Christ to complete his mission: destroy evil forever and unite absolutely God's faithful to Himself.