

The Lord Jesus Christ

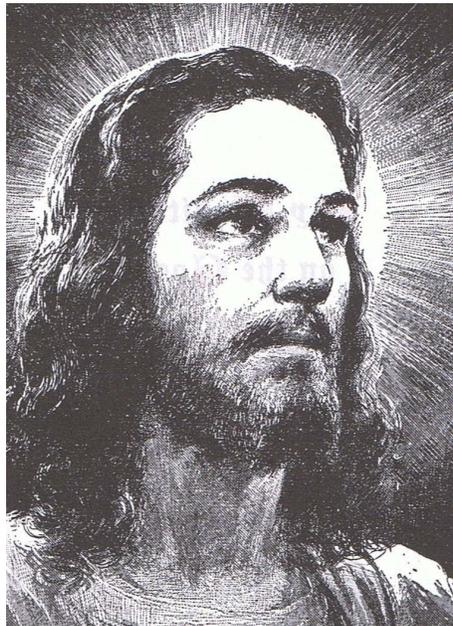
One flyer, one class cannot possibly cover this topic. Even a whole life time will not be sufficient to know the Lord. Our very eternity will be caught up in knowing and loving him more and more. What may be profitable in the context of this reflection is to consider various statements about Jesus in the Creed and examine some titles and familiar descriptions of our Lord. We begin with his very name.

Jesus

The name Jesus means in Hebrew, "God saves." The Angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name (Lk 1:31). An Angel also explained to Joseph, *You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (Matt 1:21). So his name expresses both his identity and his mission. He is God, for God alone can forgive sins. And he comes to save and set us free from the bondage of sin. We sometimes take for granted that we know Jesus' name. But consider the glory of this gift to us. In the ancient world to know the personal name of someone was to be granted a special privilege. It was to know something of the very nature of the person.

Consider this: we are on a first-name basis with our Lord. We know something of his very being. He is the God who saves. And Scripture says of his Holy Name, *There is no other name under heaven given among men by which*

we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) And his name is so holy that none can fail to acknowledge it: *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth* (Phil 2:10) "Jesus, There's something about that name."



The Christ

The word "Christ" comes from a Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah* which means "anointed." Kings of the ancient world were anointed by having oil poured upon the head. Jesus however was anointed by his Father with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16). So here is a sign of his kingly status. Jesus is our anointed king and savior. Here too the angels first announced his status when they declared to the shepherds, *For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* (Lk 2:11)

Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah (Jn 4:25-26; Mk 14:61-62) but he often shows some reserve (e.g. Mt 16:20) because it was understood by some of his day in too human a sense, as essentially political (e.g. Jn 6:15).

The Eternal Son of the Father

Jesus has always existed. We say in the Creed that he is "eternally begotten of the Father." That is to say, there was never a time when the Heavenly Father was alone and without his Son or the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself taught of his eternal existence when he said to the people of his day, *Amen, Amen, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.* This was not bad grammar on Jesus' part. It was the best way for him to express his eternal existence and, as we shall discuss in a moment, it was also a way for him to indicate his divine nature. Other scripture passages also teach us of Jesus' eternal existence. For example, *In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through him and for him. He is before all else that is, and in him all things hold together* (Col 1:16-17). So Jesus has always existed. He has always loved the Father and been his Son. Note too, when we say Jesus is the eternal Son of the Father we are not describing a relationship that is abstract. It is a relationship of real and infinite love. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan the Father expressed his love and joy over Jesus: *This is my beloved Son, with*

whom I am well pleased. (Mt 3:17). Jesus too expressed his longing for the Father, *Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made* (John 17:5). Jesus knows and has always known joy, limitless love and acceptance in the Father's presence. Jesus does not only have this for himself. He wants to share the joys of his sonship with us: *O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee...I made known to [my disciples] thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* (Jn 17:25-26)

Lord

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew name for God, *Yahweh*, was translated *Kyrios* which means "Lord." When we use this title for Jesus we are thus professing our faith that he is divine, that he is God. Jesus uses the title "Lord" for himself (e.g. Jn 13:13) and Jesus is called "Lord." over 70 times in the New Testament. In addition to referring to divinity, the word "Lord" also denotes the authority that Jesus has over us and all creation. In acknowledging his status as Lord Jesus said, *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?* (Lk 6:46). Thus, in calling Jesus, "Lord" we acknowledge that he is to have authority over our lives and that he is owed what scripture calls "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5).

True God

We have already discussed a great

deal of the divinity of Jesus: He is God. As the creed proclaims, *Jesus is God from God, Light from Light, True God from God.* Recall a passage from scripture we have already considered: *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.* (Jn 8:58-59) Why did the people who heard Jesus that day take up stones to kill him? Because they understood that Jesus was using the Divine Name "I am" (which translates the Hebrew name for God, "Yahweh") for himself. Since they did not believe in him, they considered this a blasphemy which deserved death. But Jesus was speaking to them the truth about himself. He is God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, the eternal Son of the Father.



And yet, it is an awesome mystery to contemplate that the infinite and eternal God could walk so humbly among us. An ancient song sang of

this great mystery, *Alpha et Omega sits in Mommy's lap.* Jesus, though very God, lived in great humility and became the servant of all out of endless love for us. Scripture says, *Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God...emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.* (Phil 2:6-8).

True Man

Jesus did not walk among us like a ghost. He had real flesh and blood. He knew hunger, and fatigue as well as exhilaration and the pleasure of a good meal. He also experienced the full range of human feelings and emotion: joy, sorrow, fear and courage, anger and peace. Jesus was fully human. You and I can be less than fully human due to the disfiguring quality of sin. But Jesus who is without sin is a model of what the human person is really called to be. St. Irenaeus wrote: *The glory of God is man, fully alive.* And thus Jesus shows us what it means to be fully alive: *I came that they might have life and have it to the full* (Jn 10:10). Jesus understands our limitations, he lived with them. But he also shows us our greatness and our ability to live in the freedom of God's children. *For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace* (Heb 4:15-16)