

**FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION**

**October 8, 2023**

**CATHOLICISM 101 – WEEK 5: WHY DID CHRIST DIE?**

A few years back, I was doing research on the Incarnation. I had heard some claims about why God became man that didn't seem to add up to me. Some said Christ only came to earth to teach us to be nice to people. Others suggested that God became man as an act of solidarity with human weakness. But it seemed to me that God could instruct us in charity without taking flesh, and the intrinsic appeal of God being like me was a little hard to understand. The less like me God is, the more I can trust Him. So, I started doing some reading. The first book I cracked open was "On the Incarnation" by St. Athanasius followed by, "Why God Became Man" by St. Anslem. To my surprise, the basic assumption of both of them was that God became man in order to die.

As Fulton Sheen put it, most men are born to live. Only Christ was born in order to die. It is true that He did a lot of inspirational things during His earthly life, but the central purpose of His coming to earth was to sacrifice Himself on the Cross. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour." (John 12:27).



Of all the things Our Lord did, from preaching, to healing, to raising the dead, why was this the central goal? It's because apart from His voluntary death on the Cross, we could not enter heaven. Sin had barred us from paradise. Justice demanded that a penalty be paid for wrongdoing and when that penalty was paid by us, it meant hell.

Whatever problems we were dealing with on earth with lost eyesight and lame limbs naturally paled in comparison to this last problem. In His charity, God's central concern was that our souls were being lost forever. Thus God became man to pay the price on our behalf so that we would have a chance at heaven. It was an infinite price and thus only an infinitely perfect victim would suffice. But it was a debt incurred by humankind and thus only a man could justly pay it.

Since Christ's death, we have a chance at a clean slate. Baptism allows us to start fresh. We are placed back in the position of Adam and Eve before the fall and have the chance to run the race they began but fell before finishing. By His death, Christ earned us the ability to start over each time we repent. Though we may trip many times on the way, the gates of heaven are now open; if we persevere in faith, hope, and charity, we may one day enter through them.

–Joe Moreshead

[Watch the recorded class here.](#)