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Last Sunday, Joshua led our discussion about Christ, giving us a lot of context and helping us understand why it's important to really learn about Christ. It is critically important for us to have as clear an understanding of the Incarnation as possible. Even the heretics of ancient times were seeking out a deeper understanding of God, and of Christ. Through their own lens of interpretation, though still guided by Scripture, they went off-track. The Church's lens is the Truth, not based on any single person's interpretation, but upon 2000 years of corporate learning, digging, and teaching as the Body of Christ.

When we started talking about God as Trinity, I read the first half of the Athanasian Creed. The second half, which I'll read to you now, is specifically regarding Our Lord in His Incarnation. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation, that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born into the world. Perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.

From St. Robert Bellarmine:

You know all men are born from their father and mother, and the mother does not remain a virgin, and after she conceives she bears a son; but on the other hand, after the Son of God was Incarnate, He refused a Father in regard to relation, but only had a unique mother, Mary, who always remained an inviolable virgin. For the Holy Spirit, who is the third person in the Godhead, and the one and the same God with the Father and the Son, for His infinite Omnipotence, from the purest blood of this virgin created the body of the most perfect Infant, and in the same moment He created that most noble soul and united it with the body of this Infant; and all these the Son of God took in His Person; to such an extent that Jesus Christ, who before was only God, at length began to be a man, and in the same way whereby God had a Father without a mother, so by that manner the man had a Mother without a Father. Yet, the Holy Spirit is not called the Father of the Christ, even though He was "conceived by the Holy Ghost." To be Father of something is to make it of one's own substance, of the same being. The Holy Spirit made the body of the Son of God, but He did so from the flesh of the Virgin, not from His own proper substance. Nevertheless, all 3 members of the Divine Godhead work together in all things, yet it was only the Son who put on human flesh in the Incarnation.

Additional from Spirago:

Louis of Granada writes, "Just as the sun must be wrapped in clouds if we are to gaze upon it with eyes undimmed, so God wrapped Himself in flesh as in a cloud, so that the eyes of our

soul might bear to look upon Him.” Human thought must be clothed in words to reach our ears; so God clothed Himself in human nature (The Word) to reach the souls of men. The Incarnation is in a peculiar manner the work of all 3 Divine Persons. While on the Second Person was united to flesh, the Incarnation is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, because it is the greatest work of God’s love. This Incarnation is a mystery which we cannot fully understand, but we can admire and honor. [This is why we genuflect at its mention, both in the Creed and in the Angelus.]

Spirago and Anselm:

God may have chosen some other way of redeeming man. He might have remitted the guilt of our sins without demanding any satisfaction at all. St. Augustine writes, “There are some foolish people who think that God could have redeemed mankind otherwise than by Himself taking flesh, and suffering at the hands of sinners. He might have followed quite another plan.” Yet, this was a display both of His justice and His mercy, together. Perfect satisfaction could only be given by a God-man, by God and man united. The greatness of an injury is measured by the dignity of the person who suffers. Hence, an offense given to God is an infinite offense. No finite being, not even the most perfect angel, could atone for an infinite offense against an infinite God. Only God Himself could atone for that. Anselm writes, “So that, to redeem man it was necessary that God should become man.” As God only He could not suffer; as man only He could not redeem. Yet, at the same time, because it was mortal man who committed the offense against God, mortal man had to be the one to provide satisfaction for such offense. Therefore, God assumed human nature. If a valuable portrait is damaged beyond recognition, it can’t be restored unless the person who is in it comes again to sit for the artist. God had to come to earth to restore His image, His likeness, His portrait in man [St. Athanasius].

In His Incarnation, the Christ remained God, losing none of His dignity. In fact, He did not leave Heaven, but like a star, visible to us from the firmament of the heavens, yet shrouded by the light passing through the atmosphere, so the divinity of Christ is only slightly dimmed, hidden in His human nature [hence the Transfiguration]. His putting on of human nature did not in any way lessen Him. Because of His divine perfection, His touching of human nature in such an intimate way rather raised the dignity of humanity.

In Christ there are 2 natures, human and divine, which are intimately united, yet still distinct. Hence, Christ has 2-fold knowledge, human and divine. It was in this way that He Himself denied all knowledge of the day and hour of the Last Judgment, because it is not to be known by man. Christ also has a 2-fold will, human and divine, the human will being subject to the divine - hence the dialogue in the Garden of Gethsemane, like a man who does not want pain, yet goes willingly into surgery. Still, there is only 1 person, and He is divine. Christ is the Son of the Father, and the Son of Mary. He could neither sin nor err. Every action He takes has infinite value.

St. John Vianney:

Christ being God, and God being perfect, every action done works for God’s greatest glory. Christ came by way of the Blessed Virgin, coming as a babe, being raised by her and His foster-father, St. Joseph. He did not remain in their home for just 10-12 years, but for 30, subjecting Himself to their judgment and authority. He could have chosen to come to earth in the fulness of His Manhood, glorious and mighty. If that had been more glorifying to God, though, then that’s exactly what He would have done. But He did not. He subjected Himself to parents. Thus, this was the MOST glorifying thing to God.

Application note: As God chose the Blessed Virgin to come to us, He made her the unique means of relationship between God and man. He came to us through Her, and we most appropriately reach to Him through Her, as well. He subjected Himself to human parents until such time as His mission began, so we also are to subject ourselves to human parents in all things until our missions begin for adulthood (5th Commandment).