

Supplemental Information for  
*Why Catholic? Journey through the Catechism*  
*The Profession of Faith: What We Believe*  
To group leaders of  
Christ the King Parish, Springfield, Illinois

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## **Session 6: “The Incarnation”**

### **Suggested Environment**

Note again that there is a recommendation for the *USCCA* to be a part of each table arrangement. You may want to drape a strip of green fabric over the table on which your environment is set to highlight we are in “ordinary time” and hence the green vestments a priest and a deacon are to wear. Our focus this session is on the Incarnation and since we could celebrate in images this wonderful event from the Annunciation to the Nativity, images that you can find to decorate your environment from both certainly will work and can stimulate our imagination. I’m going to have Joanna put out one of her favorite crib sets since the Nativity celebrates His birth among us. Images such as these are nice to have too:



Fra Angelico’s “Annunciation”



Stained glass Nativity

### **Lifting Our Hearts**

You will certainly recognize these words from the Gloria that is said or sung on all Sundays outside of Lent and Advent and on all other festive days and solemnities. The Gloria is truly a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to our loving God who sent His Son to dwell among us. Perhaps you could encourage your group to join their voices in song or recitation as we join in community to give praise. It is so important as a community to join in rather than being silent spectators as the choir voices their praise.

## Sharing Our Good News

I had suggested last session that an action aimed at either end of the spectrum of life would certainly be appropriate, perhaps someone would like to report on what they did to enhance respect for creation and life.

## Reflection One “Jesus Among Us”

This is a really great story and as a parent who had four children fall asleep on his chest over the years and now several grand children, I can relate to that very special feeling of holding precious life and wondering what the future has in store for this child. You might just wonder aloud for you group what Joseph or Mary might have thought as they too held this very special child, wondering what the future held, knowing the leap of faith both of them took as their part in the Incarnation. I certainly hope the man in the story shared his foundational experience at a later age with his first born daughter and that the two of them still watch a midnight Mass together.

There certainly is a hint at the bottom of page 42 that Pope Benedict XVI’s search for the “face of the Lord” is our search too. And in the face of this profound mystery, the very first sentence on the top of page 43 deserves a highlight. Keeping in mind what was said about the Trinity in CCC 237, that there are “...some mysteries hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God...” we stand before this mystery of the Incarnation and turn to Holy Scripture for answers as to the “why?” In this light the following quotes from God’s revelation begin to give us an answer:

- **Mt 1: 20-21....”Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary for your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**
- **1 John 4:9.....”God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.”**
- **John 3:16.....”For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life.”**
- **John 6: 51.....”I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”**

These answers (and more could be cited) that I have highlighted must be seen with the eyes of faith, believed, and lived. It might help to remind everyone that both JP II and Pope Benedict have used similar language to explain why God sent his Son to us. Both have said in various ways that God sent his Son to show us what it means to be truly human. Now that might take some explaining but the remaining paragraphs on page 43 get at some of the substance of what that might mean. That is to say, that “obedience to God’s unfolding plan” plays a role in all of our lives; that being born into a family and community does also; that there is holiness in the

daily work and life of the family; that Christ's "...example of self-sacrificing love and obedience to God serves as a model of holiness for all our relationships; and that "...what we believe about Jesus makes a profound difference in how we live our lives." Having said all that, I haven't even touched on the entire question of suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent in this world, of which Christ was the most innocent victim who went willing to endure suffering and death for another.

Should you want to look over the much wider field of [Christology, this article](#) will give you much more information on all aspects of the person of Christ, including many links within it to other issues including the history of the early Church's understanding of just who Jesus was as well as many of the various heresies that arose as the early Church began to understand the message and life of Jesus the Christ. The New Advent site using the older edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia has this [classic article on the Incarnation](#).

As a group leader, I would encourage you to read pages 84-87 of the *USCCA* because they are a great supplement to this Reflection One. Note the doctrinal bullet points on pages 85-86 and the meditation that concludes on the question of "Why" the Incarnation. One of the meditation points given reads: "God became man that we may partake in the divine nature. 'He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature' (2 Pt 1:4)." I am reminded of that as I am privileged as a deacon to prepare the cup with the water and wine before the consecration. The prayer that I or the priest says silently is "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity"—a fitting prayer to enter into the mystery of "Why?"

### **Scripture: Pondering the Word**

#### **John 1:1-5, 14**

1                   <sup>1 2</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word  
was God.

2                   He was in the beginning with God.

3                   <sup>3</sup> All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What  
came to be

4                   through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race;

5                   <sup>4</sup> the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

14                  And the Word became flesh <sup>9</sup> and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his  
glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

This is sometimes arguably the most recognized section of scripture. It's poetic and theological nature have captured the hearts and minds of Christians for nineteen hundred years. Should you wish to look at the footnotes on this section; the little numbers in greenish blue will take you to those notes that are on the USCCB website where the complete New American Bible can be found.

### **Sharing Questions**

Both are wonderful questions that draw us into ourselves in a way. See if you can bridge the sense of Jesus present in us to the key idea of light in the scripture we have just read. If I allow Jesus to dwell in me, how am I "light" to those around me, my family, friends, co-workers, and those I encounter in daily life?

### **Reflection Two: "Jesus: Divine and Human"**

This section begins with an admission of the confusion that appears in the Gospels and is evident at different times in Jesus' public ministry. The Scribes and the Pharisees are always trying to understand who he is and you may recall the question sent by John the Baptist himself, "Are you the one who is the Messiah (I'm paraphrasing) or should we look for someone else?" Jesus even asks his disciples on different occasions and in different Gospels and the text quotes probably one of the most recognized answers by Peter himself (Matthew 16: 15-17). I would just simply encourage you to have your groups underline the first sentence in the second paragraph on page 44, since that "apostolic Tradition" (note the capital "T") is the faith of our Church. Also please note the very succinct box in grey on page 45 from the *USSCA p 83*.

Both references to the Council of Nicea and that of Chalcedon (125 years later) give a good indication of what was discussed in earlier sessions as we spoke of the "unfolding" of God's revelation over time. Even though I've linked several articles above to Christology and Incarnation, here's an article entitled "[Biblical Doctrine: The Person of Christ](#)" that is well worth printing for your own library or downloading the PDF version and keeping in your computer library. In particular it expands on the two councils and highlights in a very understandable way the issues and the major heresies that arose as the Church struggled to answer this very question Jesus himself asked his own apostles, "Who do people say I am?"

Above all, I hope you will be able to point to the bottom of page 45 and have everyone underline the first sentence of that last paragraph. I think the idea of "surrendering our lives" like Mary and Joseph did, "to a mystery we cannot fully understand in our lifetimes" would make a great departure point for discussion and closure on this great mystery. Maybe you can help your group really understand that sense of some mysteries just have to be lived to make sense to us. After all, isn't that at the heart of faith—something we live by which gives us meaning, direction, and confidence in all we do. And in the case of this great mystery, inherent in it is the promise from God's Son that we have talked about above of a share in the divine life and the words of revelation that "God so loved the world....that we may have divine life."

## **Sharing Our Faith**

Again, some good reflection questions but I think that a group could benefit from a discussion of the second bullet point: “What qualities of Jesus would I like to see more of in my own life?” The implication of a discussion of this type of topic would also be to help develop our knowledge of the stories of Jesus in the Gospels. For example, if someone just were to say I think Jesus must have been a very patient person, ask why so? Perhaps they will then recall a situation, for example, when the two disciples are trying to determine who gets to sit on his right side in the kingdom. Jesus must have had patience because that is just one of a number of times when he almost has to say to his disciples, “I guess you still don’t get what this kingdom is all about, do you?”

## **Living the Good News**

Again, good suggestions but you might want to tie into the above using some of those qualities of Jesus the group saw evidence for in the scriptures. The key question in Living the Good News then becomes my task and goal to grow into or develop that quality to a higher level of perfection in my life. I really love the possibilities for meditation on those simple words in the grey box with the heading “Jesus Our Model” from Pope Benedict: “He has brought God, and now we know his face, now we can call upon Him.” We certainly can call upon his sacramental presence in our life to help us grow into those qualities centered on love that are necessary to form the basis of true Christian community.

## **Lifting our Hearts**

Again, you will find me encouraging each group to open up the closing to spontaneous prayer for all the variety of intentions that we always do carry in our hearts so suggest going around the room/group to ask each person present to pray for a specific intention. Be a good example and start using our CTK format: EG; For an increase of the presence of Jesus in my life and the qualities that will make him visible to others, let us pray to the Lord. Group response: Lord, hear our prayer.

I would also encourage, in addition to the “cute” poem in Lifting our Hearts, using the prayer of Mary that is part of every official evening prayer said by the entire Church. That prayer is known as the Gospel Canticle of Mary of can be found in Luke 1:46-55 or copied from below:

**Gospel Canticle of Mary – Luke 1:46-55**

**My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.**

**From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.**

**He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.**

**He has shown the strength of his arm,  
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.**

**He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.**

**He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.**

**He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.**

And he certainly has remembered his promise of mercy to all of us the New children of Israel.

Addendum Note1:

I would certainly encourage you to poll your group about the second “semester” of Why Catholics and invite them to join together with you if you plan on continuing in your role as a group leader. As the Looking Ahead section suggests, some groups have gotten together between times to continue their growth and meeting—that is certainly up to each group and doesn’t have to be a formal event. Part of the genius behind small groups is the encouragement that meeting fosters for both common growth as well as individual development.

Addendum Note2: Any feedback you would like to give is most welcome. Please reply to

[allaabs@comcast.net](mailto:allaabs@comcast.net)