

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD

The Good News: God has sent his Son

422 “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son,
born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were
389 under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”¹ This is
“the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”² God has visited his
people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his
descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation—he has sent his
2763 own “beloved Son.”³

423 We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew
of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the
Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who
died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate
during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God
made man. He “came from God,”⁴ “descended from heaven,”⁵ and
“came in the flesh.”⁶ For “the Word became flesh and dwelt among
us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the
only Son from the Father. . . . And from his fullness have we all
received, grace upon grace.”⁷

424 Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the
Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: “You are the Christ, the Son
683 of the living God.”⁸ On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter,
552 Christ built his Church.⁹

1 *Gal* 4:4-5.

2 *Mk* 1:1.

3 *Mk* 1:11; cf. *Lk* 1:55, 68.

4 *Jn* 13:3.

5 *Jn* 3:13; 6:33.

6 1 *Jn* 4:2.

7 *Jn* 1:14, 16.

8 *Mt* 16:16.

9 Cf. *Mt* 16:18; St. Leo the Great, *Sermo* 4, 3: PL 54, 150-152; 51, 1: PL 54, 308-309; 62, 2: PL 54, 350-351; 83, 3: PL 54, 431-432.

"To preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ"¹⁰

425 The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."¹¹ And they invite people of every era to enter into the joy 850, 858 of their communion with Christ:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.¹²

At the heart of catechesis: Christ

426 "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father . . . who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with 1698 us forever."¹³ To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him."¹⁴ Catechesis aims at 513 putting "people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."¹⁵ 260

427 In catechesis "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, . . . is taught—everything else is taught with reference to him—and it is Christ alone who teaches—anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. . . 2145 . Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'"¹⁶ 876

10 Eph 3:8.

11 Acts 4:20.

12 1 Jn 1:1-4.

13 CT 5.

14 CT 5.

15 CT 5.

16 CT 6; cf. Jn 7:16.

428 Whoever is called “to teach Christ” must first seek “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus”; he must suffer “the loss of all things . . .” in order to “gain Christ and be found in him,” and “to know him and the power of his resurrection, and [to] share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible [he] may attain the resurrection from the dead.”¹⁷

429 From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to “evangelize,” and to lead others to the “yes” of
851 faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt. To this end, following the order of the Creed, Jesus’ principal titles—“Christ,” “Son of God,” and “Lord” (*article 2*)—will be presented. The Creed next confesses the chief mysteries of his life—those of his Incarnation (*article 3*), Paschal mystery (*articles 4 and 5*), and glorification (*articles 6 and 7*).

ARTICLE 2

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD

I. JESUS

430 Jesus means in Hebrew: “God saves.” At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name,
210 which expresses both his identity and his mission.¹⁸ Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made
402 man, “will save his people from their sins.”¹⁹ In Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.

431 In the history of salvation God was not content to deliver Israel “out of the house of bondage”²⁰ by bringing them out of Egypt. He also saves them from their sin. Because sin is always an
1441, 1850 offense against God, only he can forgive it.²¹ For this reason Israel, becoming more and more aware of the universality of sin, will no
388 longer be able to seek salvation except by invoking the name of the Redeemer God.²²

17 *Phil* 3:8-11.

18 Cf. *Lk* 1:31.

19 *Mt* 1:21; cf. 2:7.

20 *Deut* 5:6.

21 Cf. *Ps* 51:4, 12.

22 Cf. *Ps* 79:9.

432 The name "Jesus" signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation,²³ so that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."²⁴ 589, 2666 389 161

433 The name of the Savior God was invoked only once in the year by the high priest in atonement for the sins of Israel, after he had sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies with the sacrificial blood. The mercy seat was the place of God's presence.²⁵ When St. Paul speaks of Jesus whom "God put forward as an expiation by his blood," he means that in Christ's humanity "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."²⁶ 615 2812 2614

434 Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Savior God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name."²⁷ The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name.²⁸ 2812 2614

435 The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words "through our Lord Jesus Christ." The *Hail Mary* reaches its high point in the words "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." The Eastern prayer of the heart, the *Jesus Prayer*, says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word "Jesus" on their lips. 2667-2668 2676

II. CHRIST

436 The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means "anointed." It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets.²⁹ This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom 690, 695

23 Cf. *Jn* 3:18; *Acts* 2:21; 5:41; 3 *Jn* 7; *Rom* 10:6-13.

24 *Acts* 4:12; cf. 9:14; *Jas* 2:7.

25 Cf. *Ex* 25:22; *Lev* 16:2,15-16; *Num* 7:89; *Sir* 50:20; *Heb* 9:5, 7.

26 *Rom* 3:25; 2 *Cor* 5:19.

27 *Phil* 2:9-10; cf. *Jn* 12:28.

28 Cf. *Acts* 16:16-18; 19:13-16; *Mk* 16:17; *Jn* 15:16.

29 Cf. *Ex* 29:7; *Lev* 8:12; 1 *Sam* 9:16; 10:1; 16:1,12-13; 1 *Kings* 1:39; 19:16.

God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively.³⁰ It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once
 711-716 as king and priest, and also as prophet.³¹ Jesus fulfilled the messianic
 783 hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet, and king.

437 To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus
 as the Messiah promised to Israel: "To you is born this day in the
 525, 486 city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."³² From the begin-
 ning he was "the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into
 the world," conceived as "holy" in Mary's virginal womb.³³ God
 called Joseph to "take Mary as your wife, for that which is con-
 ceived in her is of the Holy Spirit," so that Jesus, "who is called
 Christ," should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic
 lineage of David.³⁴

438 Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission,
 "for the name 'Christ' implies 'he who anointed,' 'he who was
 727 anointed' and 'the very anointing with which he was anointed.'
 The one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is
 the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anoint-
 ing."³⁵ His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the
 535 time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when
 "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with
 power," "that he might be revealed to Israel"³⁶ as its Messiah. His
 works and words will manifest him as "the Holy One of God."³⁷

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their
 hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messi-
 528-529 anic "Son of David," promised by God to Israel.³⁸ Jesus accepted
 547 his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it
 was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a
 sense, as essentially political.³⁹

30 Cf. *Ps* 2:2; *Acts* 4:26-27.

31 Cf. *Isa* 11:2; 61:1; *Zech* 4:14; 6:13; *Lk* 4:16-21.

32 *Lk* 2:11.

33 *Jn* 10:36; cf. *Lk* 1:35.

34 *Mt* 1:20; cf. *Mt* 1:16; *Rom* 1:1; 2 *Tim* 2:8; *Rev* 22:16.

35 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.*, 3, 18, 3: PG 7/1, 934.

36 *Acts* 10:38; *Jn* 1:31.

37 *Mk* 1:24; *Jn* 6:69; *Acts* 3:14.

38 Cf. *Mt* 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15.

39 Cf. *Jn* 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; *Mt* 22:41-46; *Lk* 24:21.

440 Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man.⁴⁰ He unveiled the authentic content of his 552 messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven," and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴¹ Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he 550 is raised high on the cross.⁴² Only after his Resurrection will Peter 445 be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."⁴³

III. THE ONLY SON OF GOD

441 In the Old Testament, "*son of God*" is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings.⁴⁴ It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called "*son of God*," it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus "*son of God*," as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this.⁴⁵

442 Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," for Jesus responds solemnly: "Flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but *my Father* who is in heaven."⁴⁶ Similarly Paul will write, regarding his 552 conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles. . . ."⁴⁷ "And in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'"⁴⁸ From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will 424

40 Cf. Mt 16:16-23.

41 Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Isa 53:10-12.

42 Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43.

43 Acts 2:36.

44 Cf. Deut 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; Job 1:6; Ex 4:22; Hos 2:1; 11:1; Jer 3:19; Sir 36:11; Wis 18:13; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 82:6.

45 Cf. 1 Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7; Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47.

46 Mt 16:16-17.

47 Gal 1:15-16.

48 Acts 9:20.

be the center of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation.⁴⁹

443 Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am."⁵⁰ Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as "the Son" who knows the Father, as distinct from the "servants" God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels.⁵¹ He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying "our Father," except to command them: "You, then, pray like this: 'Our Father,'" and he 2786 emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father."⁵²

444 The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father 536, 554 designates Jesus his "beloved Son."⁵³ Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God," and by this title affirms his eternal preexistence.⁵⁴ He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God."⁵⁵ In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God,"⁵⁶ that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

445 After his Resurrection, Jesus' divine sonship becomes manifest in the power of his glorified humanity. He was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by 653 his Resurrection from the dead."⁵⁷ The apostles can confess: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."⁵⁸

IV. LORD

209 446 In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name *YHWH*, by which God revealed himself to Moses,⁵⁹ is

49 Cf. 1 Thess 1:10; Jn 20:31; Mt 16:18

50 Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62.

51 Cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36.

52 Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17.

53 Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. Mt 17:5.

54 Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36.

55 Jn 3:18.

56 Mk 15:39.

57 Rom 1:3; cf. Acts 13:33.

58 Jn 1:14.

59 Cf. Ex 3:14.

rendered as *Kyrios*, "Lord." From then on, "*Lord*" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "*Lord*" both for the Father and—what is new—for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself.⁶⁰

447 Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of *Psalms* 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles.⁶¹ Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by 548 works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death, and sin.

448 Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as "*Lord*." This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing.⁶² At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "*Lord*" expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus.⁶³ 208, 683 In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: "*My Lord and my God!*" It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: "*It is the Lord!*"⁶⁴ 641

449 By attributing to Jesus the divine title "*Lord*," the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honor, and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because "*he was in the form of God*,"⁶⁵ and the Father manifested 461 the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting 653 him into his glory.⁶⁶

450 From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an 668-672 absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not "*the Lord*."⁶⁷ "The Church 2242 . . . believes that the key, the center, and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master."⁶⁸

60 Cf. 1 Cor 2:8.

61 Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13.

62 Cf. Mt 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; et al.

63 Cf. Lk 1:43; 2:11.

64 Jn 20:28; Jn 21:7.

65 Cf. Acts 2:34-36; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Rev 5:13; Phil 2:6.

66 Cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11.

67 Cf. Rev 11:15; Mk 12:17; Acts 5:29.

68 GS 10 § 3; cf. 45 § 2.

- 451 Christian prayer is characterized by the title "Lord,"
 2664-2665 whether in the invitation to prayer ("The Lord be with you."), its
 2817 conclusion ("through Christ our Lord"), or the exclamation full of
 trust and hope: *Maran atha* ("Our Lord, come!"), or *Marana tha*
 ("Come, Lord!")—"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"⁶⁹

IN BRIEF

- 452 The name Jesus means "God saves." The child born of
 the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, "for he will save his
 people from their sins" (*Mt* 1:21): "there is no other
 name under heaven given among men by which we
 must be saved" (*Acts* 4:12).
- 453 The title "Christ" means "Anointed One" (Messiah).
 Jesus is the Christ, for "God anointed Jesus of Naz-
 areth with the Holy Spirit and with power" (*Acts*
 10:38). He was the one "who is to come" (*Lk* 7:19), the
 object of "the hope of Israel" (*Acts* 28:20).
- 454 The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal
 relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the
 only Son of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:14,18; 3:16,18); he is God
 himself (cf. *Jn* 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe
 that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. *Acts* 8:37; *1 Jn*
 2:23).
- 455 The title "Lord" indicates divine sovereignty. To con-
 fess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity.
 "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy
 Spirit" (*1 Cor* 12:3).
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69 *1 Cor* 16:22; *Rev* 22:20.

ARTICLE 3

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,
BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Paragraph 1. The Son of God Became Man

I. WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

456 With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

457 The Word became flesh *for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God*, who "loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins": "the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world," and "he was revealed to take away sins".⁷⁰ 607

Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Savior; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?⁷¹ 385

458 The Word became flesh *so that thus we might know God's love*: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him."⁷² "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."⁷³ 219

459 The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."⁷⁴ On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!"⁷⁵ Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you."⁷⁶ This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example.⁷⁷ 520, 823, 2012, 1717, 1965

70 1 Jn 4:10; 4:14; 3:5.

71 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Orat. catech.* 15: PG 45, 48B.

72 1 Jn 4:9.

73 Jn 3:16.

74 Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6.

75 Mk 9:7; cf. Deut 6:4-5.

76 Jn 15:12.

77 Cf. Mk 8:34.

460 The Word became flesh to make us “*partakers of the divine nature*”.⁷⁸ “For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of
 1265, 1391 God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might
 1988 become a son of God.”⁷⁹ “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.”⁸⁰ “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.”⁸¹

II. THE INCARNATION

461 Taking up St. John’s expression, “The Word became flesh,”⁸²
 653, 661 the Church calls “Incarnation” the fact that the Son of God assumed
 449 a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but 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.⁸³

462 The *Letter to the Hebrews* refers to the same mystery:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do your will, O God.’”⁸⁴

463 Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every
 90 spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.”⁸⁵ Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings “the mystery of our religion”: “He was manifested in the flesh.”⁸⁶

78 2 Pet 1:4.

79 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939.

80 St. Athanasius, *De inc.*, 54, 3: PG 25, 192B.

81 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57: 1-4.

82 Jn 1:14.

83 Phil 2:5-8; cf. *LH*, Saturday, Canticle at Evening Prayer.

84 Heb 10:5-7, citing Ps 40:6-8 ([7-9] LXX).

85 1 Jn 4:2.

86 1 Tim 3:16.

III. TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

464 The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth 88 of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

465 The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh."⁸⁷ But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father," and condemned Arius, who had affirmed 242 that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father.⁸⁸

466 The Nestorian heresy regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's Son. Opposing this heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the third ecumenical council at Ephesus in 431 confessed "that the Word, uniting to himself in his person the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man."⁸⁹ Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it and made it his own, from his conception. For this reason the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her 495 womb: "Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh."⁹⁰

467 The Monophysites affirmed that the human nature had ceased to exist as such in Christ when the divine person of God's Son assumed it. Faced with this heresy, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, confessed:

87 Cf. 1 Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7.

88 Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126.

89 Council of Ephesus (431): DS 250.

90 Council of Ephesus: DS 251.

Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; "like us in all things but sin." He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God.⁹¹

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (*prosopon*) and one hypostasis.⁹²

468 After the Council of Chalcedon, some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in 553 confessed that "there is but one *hypostasis* [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity."⁹³ Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be
254 attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: "He who was
616 crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity."⁹⁴

469 The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true
212 God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother:

"What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed," sings the Roman Liturgy.⁹⁵ And the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: "O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!"⁹⁶

91 Council of Chalcedon (451): DS 301; cf. *Heb* 4:15.

92 Council of Chalcedon: DS 302.

93 Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 424.

94 Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 432; cf. DS 424; Council of Ephesus, DS 255.

95 *LH*, January 1, Antiphon for Morning Prayer; cf. St. Leo the Great, *Sermo in nat. Dom.* 1, 2; PL 54, 191-192.

96 Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Troparion "*O monogenes*."

IV. HOW IS THE SON OF GOD MAN?

470 Because “human nature was assumed, not absorbed,”⁹⁷ in the mysterious union of the Incarnation, the Church was led over the course of centuries to confess the full reality of Christ’s human soul, with its operations of intellect and will, and of his human body. In parallel fashion, she had to recall on each occasion that Christ’s human nature belongs, as his own, to the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it. Everything that Christ is and does in this nature derives from “one of the Trinity.” The Son of God 516 therefore communicates to his humanity his own personal mode of existence in the Trinity. In his soul as in his body, Christ thus 626 expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity.⁹⁸

The Son of God . . . worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.⁹⁹ 2599

Christ’s soul and his human knowledge

471 Apollinarius of Laodicaea asserted that in Christ the divine Word had replaced the soul or spirit. Against this error the Church confessed that the eternal Son also assumed a rational, human soul.¹⁰⁰ 363

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,”¹⁰¹ and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience.¹⁰² This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking “the form of a slave.”¹⁰³

473 But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God’s Son expressed the divine life of his person.¹⁰⁴ “The human nature

97 GS 22 § 2.

98 Cf. *Jn* 14:9-10.

99 GS 22 § 2.

100 Cf. Damasus I: DS 149.

101 *Lk* 2:52

102 Cf. *Mk* 6:38; 8:27; *Jn* 11:34; etc.

103 *Phil* 2:7.

104 Cf. St. Gregory the Great, “*Sicut aqua*” *ad Eulogium*, *Epist. Lib.* 10, 39: PL 77, 1097A ff.; DS 475.

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."¹⁰⁵ Such is
 240 first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father.¹⁰⁶ The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.¹⁰⁷

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.¹⁰⁸ What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.¹⁰⁹

Christ's human will

475 Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed
 2008 to each other, but cooperate in such a way that the Word made flesh
 2824 willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation.¹¹⁰ Christ's human will "does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will."¹¹¹

Christ's true body

476 Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity,
 1159-1162 Christ's body was finite.¹¹² Therefore the human face of Jesus can be
 2129-2132 portrayed; at the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea II in 787) the Church recognized its representation in holy images to be legitimate.¹¹³

477 At the same time the Church has always acknowledged that in the body of Jesus "we recognize in him God made visible, [so that] we may be caught up through him in the love of things invisible."¹¹⁴ The individual characteristics of Christ's body

105 St. Maximus the Confessor, *Qu. et dub.* 66: PG 90, 840A.

106 Cf. *Mk* 14:36; *Mt* 11:27; *Jn* 1:18; 8:55; etc.

107 Cf. *Mk* 2:8; *Jn* 2:25; 6:61; etc.

108 Cf. *Mk* 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30.

109 Cf. *Mk* 13:32; *Acts* 1:7.

110 Cf. Council of Constantinople III (681): DS 556-559.

111 Council of Constantinople III: DS 556.

112 Cf. Council of the Lateran (649): DS 504.

113 Cf. *Gal* 3:1; cf. Council of Nicaea II (787): DS 600-603.

114 *Roman Missal*, Preface I of the Nativity of the Lord.

express the divine person of God's Son. He has made the features of his human body his own, to the point that they can be venerated when portrayed in a holy image, for the believer "who venerates the icon is venerating in it the person of the one depicted."¹¹⁵

The heart of the Incarnate Word

478 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God . . . loved me and gave himself for me."¹¹⁶ He has loved 487 us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 368 pierced by our sins and for our salvation,¹¹⁷ "is quite rightly 2669 considered the chief sign and symbol of that . . . love with which 766 the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.¹¹⁸

IN BRIEF

- 479 At the time appointed by God, the only Son of the Father, the eternal Word, that is, the Word and substantial Image of the Father, became incarnate; without losing his divine nature he has assumed human nature.
- 480 Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men.
- 481 Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son.
- 482 Christ, being true God and true man, has a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to his divine intellect and divine will, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- 483 The Incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word.
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115 Council of Nicaea II: DS 601.

116 *Gal* 2:20.

117 Cf. *Jn* 19:34.

118 Pius XII, encyclical, *Haurietis aquas* (1956): DS 3924; cf. DS 3812.