

Mission and Ministry of Jesus

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you came to save your people. Be with us as we strive to understand that every word and action of your life was focused on your teaching about the Father. Keep us ever mindful of how we the Church are to carry out your mission here on earth. We pray through you to the Father and the Spirit, Amen.

Scripture

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (*Matthew 16:13-16*).

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

There comes a time in life when we are faced with the question of what we believe. One aspect of this maturing faith is the ability to respond to the question: “Who is Jesus for me?” The purpose of this program is to express a response based on a faith that integrates the church’s beliefs, a community’s values and our own personal experience.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

The church of the first several centuries struggled with its articulation of Jesus’ identity. Today we profess our faith in Jesus as truly human and truly divine. Although theological formulations of this mystery took time to develop, it wasn’t until the fourth century that the Nicene Creed formally stated what the early church had believed, prayed, and what we Catholics believe and profess today - namely that Jesus Christ is one in being with the Father.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) stands out in history, as the focal point for the development of the Church’s understanding of Jesus Christ. At this Council, the Church reached a clear consensus in its understanding that in Jesus there existed two natures, human and divine, in one divine person, with no confusion between the two natures. The great value of this Council is its insistence upon the fullness of Jesus’ humanity and divinity within the unity of one person. From the days of the Council of Chalcedon, this is how we have understood the Lord.

A few statements from recent documents shed light on how the church continues to answer this question of who Jesus is.

Christ “fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.” (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, #22*).

“Christ, the Redeemer of the world, *is the Mediator between God and men,....* Christ, the Son who is of one being with the Father, is therefore the one *who reveals God’s plan for all creation and for man in particular.*” (*Apostolic Letter on the Coming of the Third Millennium, Nov. 10, 1994, #4*)

“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’ (Matthew 11: 29; John 14: 6). On the mountain of the transfiguration, the Father commands: ‘Listen to Him!’ (Matthew 9: 7; Deuteronomy 6: 4-5). Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: ‘Love one another as I have loved you. This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #459)

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for a general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. How is Jesus present in the world today?
2. Based on Jesus’ life, what activities are at the heart of Christian behavior in the world?
3. How does being a Serran contribute to being a disciple of Christ?

(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)

Closing Reflection

When we come full circle with what we really know and what we still embrace as mystery or articles of faith, we are left with the initial question presented to us by the Gospel writer, “Who do you say that I am?” Our response often affirms that in Jesus we encounter the human face of God. In essence, we will find what we seek precisely in a personal relationship with Jesus and not simply waiting for him to come. This intimate relationship moves us to proclaim, like Peter, “You are the Messiah, The Son of God.”

Bibliography

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