

# Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Fourth Sunday of Advent • Year B • December 20, 2020

*Loving God,  
you are awesome,  
for your love is eternal,  
and your Covenant  
is fulfilled in Christ,  
your Son. Without your  
guiding hand, we could do  
nothing. Without your  
abiding presence we would  
falter. Strengthen us  
according to your ways.  
Amen.*



## Sunday Word

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Psalms 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

### God's House

The prophet Nathan speaks the word of the Lord to the King, setting him straight. Why should David build God a house when God himself has raised a lowly shepherd to be king and established his line as a royal house?

### God's Son

Saint Paul reminds the Christian community that the plan of God has unfolded over many ages and has been brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. What a glorious plan, what a glorious mystery that has been fully revealed in Jesus, Son of God!

### God's Grace

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will bear God's Son. The first words out of the angel's mouth hail the young virgin as being full of grace. God's favor rests upon Mary!

## Church Teaching: The Incarnation

### A Dazzling Mystery

The Incarnation is a central tenet of Christianity. This belief affirms that the eternal Incarnate Word of God affects our whole understanding of Christ, including his Paschal Mystery. In the Nicene Creed, we confess our belief that for the sake of humanity, the eternal Word "came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

The Incarnation represents the culmination of the promise of God given to Abraham and Sarah. The Incarnation is a unique and singular event in the history of the world because, in the person of Jesus Christ, God and humanity are one in flesh. The Incarnation is a mystery, not because we have no way of understanding it, but because its significance is so awesome that it dazzles the mind and the heart.

## Reasons for the Incarnation

The Church lists four glorious reasons for the mystery of the Incarnation. They are:

- ◆ The Word became flesh to save us. This rescue operation by Christ reconciles us to God. The Father sent the Son to take away our sins and redeem us to new life.
- ◆ The Word became flesh to shower us with divine love. God acted so that we would not perish in sin but live in his love. In the Son, Jesus Christ, divine love is made physical and personal. God's plan of creation and Salvation is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- ◆ The Word became flesh to exemplify holiness of life. Jesus shows us how to live the new Law of Love, which entails sacrifice and presents to us the reward of the Beatitudes (see Matthew 5:3-12). We learn from Jesus, who teaches us humility, how to serve one another out of love for God.
- ◆ The Word became flesh to open for us a share in the divine nature. Christ makes possible our communion with God, not just in the ordinary sense of "relationship" but in the extraordinary sense of sacramental union. The Son of God became human that we might become adopted sons and daughters of God.

## Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Phrases in the Nicene Creed, such as "begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father" and "true God from true God," further specify our belief in the Incarnation. They point to the one Person of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, who unites in a unique and singular way two natures: divine and human. Without ceasing to be God, Jesus is at the same time a man. The Church confesses this belief, prays this belief, and savors this great mystery.

## Key Terms

### ETERNAL WORD

The Son of God, the fullness of God's Revelation to us, the One who took flesh in order to save us from eternal death (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 65).

### INCARNATION

Term denoting how the Son of God assumed human nature and became man in all things except sin in order to bring about our Salvation (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 461).

### MYSTERY

Deep truth, accessible and comprehensible by faith; a term also applied to the Sacraments as in the "holy mysteries" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 774).

## Voices of Faith

The Son of God assumed human nature, and in it he endured all that belongs to the human condition. This is a remedy for humankind of a power beyond our imagining.

—Saint Augustine

From his mother the Lord took nature, not sin. Jesus Christ was born from a virgin's womb by a miraculous birth, and yet his nature is not on that account unlike to ours, for he that is true God is also true man. . . . For just as the God is not changed by his compassion, so the man is not swallowed up by the dignity of the Godhead.

—Saint Leo the Great

## Further Reading

**Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 461 (the Word becomes flesh), 464 (Incarnation, the unique event), 469 (true God, true man)

**United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:** Chapter 7, especially the section entitled "True God and True Man," pages 81-83

**Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:** 86 (Incarnation), 87 (consubstantiality), 88 (Chalcedon and Incarnation), 89 (the mystery of the Incarnation)