

## LESSON 6

# JESUS: THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

### BACKGROUND READING



At the time of the fulfillment of God's promises, the Son of God entered into human history by assuming a human nature in the Person of Jesus Christ. God made His love for us known in the life, Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of His only Son.

While His Sacrifice on the Cross paid the debt of sin and defeated death, it is not the only part of Christ's life that is important. On the contrary, everything Jesus did gives us a model for how to live. The Apostles' Creed does not give us details of Jesus' life before His Passion and Crucifixion, but the Gospels do. The Gospels are the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – the four books of the Bible that tell the story of Jesus' life.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6). Through His life, Jesus reveals to us the truth of who He is, the life He has planned for us, and the way we are to live in order to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "All that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day he was taken up to Heaven is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter" (CCC 512).

So, who is Jesus?

### Jesus is God

As we recall from last month, the Israelites did not expect that the promised Messiah would be God Himself. God revealed this truth to the people. Beginning at the Annunciation, the angel revealed to Mary that the child born to her would be the Son of God. "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High... Therefore the Child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:32, 35).

In addition to sending His angel, God the Father also spoke to the people, and the Holy Spirit was made manifest. As we learned in lesson two, God is the Blessed Trinity: one God in Three Divine Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. You may wish to review this mystery of our faith in lesson two.

Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus was baptized. Matthew's Gospel describes the moment the Blessed Trinity together proclaimed Jesus: "[H]e came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son,

with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17). God the Father spoke those same words at the Transfiguration, with the addition of a command: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matthew 17:5).

## The miracles of Jesus

Jesus performed many signs and wonders during His public ministry so people would see that He was God and believe in Him. We call those signs miracles: events witnessed by others that cannot be naturally explained and are the result of God’s action. The Bible tells us the reason for these signs in John’s Gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

Jesus performed four types of miracles: miracles of supply, miracles of healing, miracles of nature, and the casting out of demons. In His miracles of supply, Jesus would create something out of little or nothing, or make one thing become something else. He would cure a person’s physical sickness or handicap. He could even raise the dead! The miracles that showed Jesus’ power over nature included calming a storm and walking on water. When He cast out demons, Jesus would perform exorcisms, commanding demons to leave the possessed.

## Jesus came to show us the life He has planned for us

Jesus came to call everyone to the Kingdom of God. We can know the following things (and more) about God’s life for us in His Kingdom: it is both within us, and yet is to come in eternity; it is a priceless treasure; it is knowledge of God; and it is abundant, full life. Finally, it is our responsibility to share the Good News of the Kingdom, make disciples of all people, and bring them into the Kingdom of God through Baptism: “When they saw Him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:17-20).

In John’s Gospel Jesus reveals to us that He must die so that mankind may believe in Him and thus find the way to eternal life. Jesus Himself becomes the way. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:14-16). The *Catechism* teaches that “Christ did not live for himself but for us” (CCC 519), and through His life He became for all men and women the way and the truth and the life.

## LESSON 7

# JESUS MAKES US CHILDREN OF GOD

### BACKGROUND READING



As we have learned, Adam and Eve's sin was not merely a personal one: it wounded human nature, making us weak and inclined to sin. Their disobedience broke the unity between Heaven and earth, causing human beings to be separated from God. In other words, sin has an eternal price – death.

#### **Jesus Came to Open the Way**

So if we are all born with Original Sin, and the consequence of sin is death, how do any of us have a chance of reaching Heaven? There's only one Way: Jesus Christ. God assumed a human nature and freely suffered the consequence of sin. Jesus conquered the power of death by rising from the dead, defeating sin so we would not have to suffer eternal separation from God. Christ's Death and Resurrection restored our true inheritance as children of God: eternal life with Him in Heaven.

In a manner of speaking, Adam squandered all that God had given him, and we lost that inheritance as Adam's descendants. But the *Catechism* explains that “for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous” (CCC 615). Because God loved

humanity so much – and not because we did anything to deserve it – Jesus came down from Heaven and reopened the way for us. Jesus shows us the way, and He is the Way.

#### **Baptism: The First Step on the Way**

As we learned in the last lesson, Jesus' whole life gives us a model to follow. He allowed Himself to be baptized in order to point us toward the first step on the way to Heaven: Baptism. When we are baptized as Christians, all our sins are forgiven, including Original Sin, and God makes us His adopted children, restoring our inheritance as partakers in His divine life. We are no longer the lost descendants of Adam; we are children of God and part of His Church.

#### **Why Baptism?**

Because Original Sin had damaged our nature so much, human beings would have to be made new. Jesus tells us in John 3:5, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” And nothing can be reborn without dying. For us to become a child of God, we

have to die, too – not physically, of course, but spiritually. In the waters of Baptism, God gives us a spiritual death and rebirth. The word *baptize* even means “to plunge.”

It is not only in Baptism that God has used water to make corrupted things new. The waters of Baptism are foreshadowed in the Old Testament stories we learned about in November. For example, in the Great Flood, God used water to flood the sinful world and make it new. He parted the waters of the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape from slavery and begin new lives as God’s Chosen People. They had to cross the River Jordan before entering the Promised Land.

In Baptism, God also uses water to make corrupt things new: us. We are freed from the stain of Original Sin and are remade as a child of God. This truth was revealed in Christ’s own Baptism, detailed in the Gospels. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the voice of God the Father spoke: “This is my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased.” Even though we can’t see it, this same thing happens at every Baptism. The Holy Spirit pours down, and the Father rejoices in His beloved child.

### **Why Is Baptism Necessary?**

But if Jesus restored our inheritance by dying on the Cross and rising again, why is there still a need for Baptism? Because Original Sin is real, and Jesus Himself gave us this Sacrament to forgive it. And He tells us clearly that Baptism is not just a suggestion: it is a requirement. He allowed Himself to be baptized, and before He ascended into

Heaven, He commanded the Apostles to baptize people “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” For more than 2,000 years, Christians have administered this Sacrament, using the same words Jesus commanded his Apostles to use.

Like all the Sacraments, Baptism actually brings about what it represents – in this case, spiritual death and rebirth; forgiveness of sin, and the possibility of heaven. That is why we baptize babies. There is no reason we should withhold God’s saving grace. And in a life-threatening emergency, anyone with the right intention can baptize another person who wishes for it.

### **Why Is There Still Sin?**

So if Baptism forgives Original Sin and makes us children of God, why is there still evil and suffering in the world? And why do we still find it so hard to avoid sin?

Because Baptism *forgives* sin – it doesn’t *remove* it. We still live in a world that is broken, and our nature is still weak and wounded. Baptism makes it possible for us to go to Heaven, but we still need to cooperate with grace and live as children of God. That’s why even after we are baptized, it’s so important to spend time with God in prayer, to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and to strive to obey God’s commands.

Sin is the cause of death, yet Jesus had no sin: He gave himself freely up to death to make it possible for us to be united with God in heaven for eternity.

The Sacraments, including Baptism, are studied in detail in Year Three of this program.