

## BRINGING GOD AND HUMANITY TOGETHER: The Life of Jesus and the Sacrament of Baptism

### *Intro*

- I. **The Gospel Story: God living a human life**
- II. **Baptism: Humans living a divine life**

### *Intro*

#### **A. The two directions: God to us, and us to God**

1. In every presentation so far, we've seen a consistent pattern to the relationship between God and humanity:
  - First, God comes to us
  - Then, hopefully, we go to God
  
2. We saw this pattern in revelation and faith, in the stories of creation and the Old Testament, and in the Annunciation event.
  - Each time, God takes the initiative on our behalf (creating us, revealing Himself to us, proposing to become man in order to save us)
  - And, when things go well, we respond to Him in love (we obey Him, accept His testimony through faith – or, in the case of Mary at the Annunciation, we consent to cooperate with His plan).

#### **B. Now it's time to look at these two movements in a little more detail.**

1. What was it actually like when God became man? What do the Gospel stories tell us about Jesus' personal history?
  - In other words, ***What does it look like for God to live a human life?***
2. And what can we do, concretely, to respond to God's initiative? How do we begin to live as Christians? Well, we'll see, the Christian life starts with Baptism.
  - a. So the second part of this presentation is about **Baptism**, and it answers the question, ***What does it look like for humans to live a divine life?***

***So let's see what happens when divinity and humanity are brought together, in Jesus Christ and in us.***

I. **The Gospel Story – God living a human life**

a. The Gospels<sup>1</sup>

- i. What was it like for the Eternal, All-powerful God to walk around on two human legs in a small patch of the Middle East two thousand years ago?
- ii. Fortunately, we don't have to just guess. There are divinely inspired records of Jesus' life on Earth. These are called the four **Gospels**
- iii. The Gospels are attributed to saints **Matthew, Mark, Luke** and **John**
  - Anyone who wants to become familiar with the Person of Jesus should study these books deeply
  - We don't have time to go over everything in these sacred writings, but we can at least highlight two crucial points: *Jesus' Miracles* and *Jesus' Mission to Suffer and Die for us*

b. Jesus' Miracles<sup>2</sup>

- i. In some important situations, we're asked to show ID (in the case of travelling to new places, for instance). We use our ID to prove to people that we're who we say we are.
- ii. Well, the miracles are Jesus' ID card. They prove that He is God, with God's power over *nature*, over *sickness*, over *evil*, and over *death*.
  - Since Jesus is all-powerful, we can trust Him with everything. We know He can and will take care of us.
  - [So what do you, personally, still need to entrust over to Our Lord?]

c. Jesus' Mission to Suffer and Die for us<sup>3</sup>

- i. God has made a world in which our choices matter.
  1. So when we freely sin, the consequences spread like ripples on a lake, causing evil and suffering throughout the world.
- ii. But God's solution to the problem of evil is the ultimate act of creative genius.
  1. Christ took the ugliness of human life, concentrated at Calvary, and turned it into something beautiful, the way a great sculptor might recycle a pile of trashy tin cans and turn them into a magnificent metal statue.

***Now the world needs to know that the problem of evil and suffering finally has an answer in Jesus Christ. So who is going to spread the good news?***

d. Spreading the Gospel Story<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 6, in the opening paragraph

<sup>2</sup> The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 6, "**The Miracles of Jesus**"

<sup>3</sup> The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 6, "**Jesus comes to show us the life He has planned for us**"

<sup>4</sup> is found in Lesson 6, "**Jesus comes to show us the life He has planned for us**"

- i. The last thing Jesus commanded us to do before Ascending into Heaven was a) to *spread the Gospel* and b) *baptize*. We'll talk more about Baptism in just a moment, but let's take a moment now and ask, "Why is it so important to spread the Gospel" (= **evangelize**)?
- ii. Jesus is the only bridge between us and our eternal happiness, He's the only way to know what it means to fully be human, He's the only way to know how much we are loved by God, and how to live fully in love.
  - If you know all this, how can you keep it to yourself? Wouldn't it be unspeakably selfish not to try and share it?
- iii. Imagine someone coming up to you in the next life, and says,
  - "You knew? You *knew*? You knew about God's love, and Christ's sacrifice, and that I could have been with the Creator of the Universe through Baptism and He could have been with me through the Eucharist? You knew the meaning of human existence, what happens to us after we die, and the divine instructions for love and happiness – you knew all that and didn't even offer to share it with me because it might have been awkward? Do you have any idea what I had to suffer, do you have any idea what I might have been spared, the horror that might have been averted in my life, if you had just had the courage to talk to me?"
  - Yes it can be awkward to talk about our faith with others. But it's Christ's command.
  - And if we have faith in Him, and love for our neighbor, we will commit ourselves – as the first Christians did – to proclaiming the Gospel, not obnoxiously, but with courage.
- iv. But suppose someone is converted to Christ. Suppose they hear the proclamation, and accept it. What should they do first?
  - In Acts chapter 2, at the Pentecost event, those who hear the first preaching of the Apostles say, "What shall we do?" And Peter replies, "Repent, and be baptized!"

***So why is Baptism the first step of the Christian Life?***

**II. Baptism: Humans living a Divine Life<sup>5</sup>**

a. Baptism as Birth

- i. Jesus refers to Baptism as being "Born water and the Spirit" (John 3:5)

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<sup>5</sup> The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 7.

- ii. *The water itself symbolizes birth* (think of when the “water breaks” in childbirth)
  - iii. Really, Baptism is when we are adopted by God
    - God only has one Son by nature, but when we unite ourselves to Jesus in Baptism, we are adopted into His family, and we receive the inheritance of eternal, perfect happiness
- b. Baptism as Death
- i. Paul refers to Baptism as entering Christ’s death (Romans 6:3)
  - ii. *The water itself signifies death* (originally, those who were baptized were submerged under water – and humans can’t live under water).
  - iii. Getting baptized, or having our children baptized, is a great act of faith in God.
    - It means we believe that we do not fear death or hardship for ourselves or our children, as long as we are with Christ.
- c. Baptism as Cleansing
- i. Baptism involves a washing, a cleansing.
  - ii. *The water itself signifies cleansing* (you use water to get dirt off)
  - iii. Baptism removes original sin, and forgives any personal sins we have committed before our baptism.
- d. Baptism as a New Life
- i. The Holy Spirit – God’s very life – enters our souls at Baptism
  - ii. *The water itself signifies life* (no one can survive without water)
  - iii. After Baptism, we live with a divine life.
    - Of course, that doesn’t mean *all* the effects of original sin are gone. We still have to deal with *temptation, sickness, sorrow, misunderstandings, and physical death*.
    - But it means we have the beginnings of heavenly life inside us.

***So just as in Jesus, God took on human life, so in Baptism, we take on divine life***

***And just as Jesus gave His life for us, so we the Baptized are called to give our lives for Him***