



JESUS CHRIST

The Mysteries of his Life

Texts from the

Catechism of the Catholic Church

THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST'S LIFE

All to be seen in the light of Christmas and Easter

Concerning Christ's life the Creed speaks only about the mysteries of the Incarnation (conception and birth) and Paschal mystery (passion, crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension). It says nothing explicitly about the mysteries of Jesus' hidden or public life, but the articles of faith concerning his Incarnation and Passover do shed light on the whole of his earthly life. "All that Jesus did and taught, from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven," (Acts 1:1-2) is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter. (512)

Christ's whole life is mystery

According to circumstances catechesis will make use of all the richness of the mysteries of Jesus. Here it is enough merely to indicate some elements common to all the mysteries of Christ's life. (513)

'So that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God'

Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted. What is written in the Gospels was set down there "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (Jn 20:31) (514)

The Gospels were written to share the faith with others

The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery.

Jesus' humanity was a 'sacrament' of his divinity

His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:9)". His humanity appeared as "sacrament", that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission. (515)

CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS' MYSTERIES

Revelation of the Father

Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation of the Father*. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9), and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Lk 9:37) Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love... among us" (I Jn 4:9). (516)

A mystery of redemption

Christ's whole life is *a mystery of redemption*. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross, but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;
- in his word which purifies its hearers;
- in his healings and exorcisms by which "he took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Mt 8:17);

→ and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us. (517)

Recapitulation of all things in Christ

Christ's whole life is a *mystery of recapitulation*. All Jesus did, said and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation:

“When Christ became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of mankind and procured for us a 'short cut' to salvation, so that what we had lost in Adam, that is, being in the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus. For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men.” (St Irenaeus) (518)

OUR COMMUNION IN THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS

Christ's riches are for all of us

All Christ's riches “are for every individual and are everybody's property.” (St Irenaeus) Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation “for us men and for our salvation” to his death “for our sins” and Resurrection “for our justification” (I Cor 15:3). He is still “our advocate with the Father”, who “always lives to make intercession” for us. (I Jn 2:1; Heb 7:25) He remains ever “in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us” (Heb 9:24). (519)

Jesus our model

In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man," who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way. (520)

The Son of God has in a certain way united himself with each man

Christ enables us *to live in him* all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man." (Vatican II) We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model:

“We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realise them in us and in his whole Church... For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.” (St John Eudes) (521)

IN BRIEF

- **“The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of world, and his Resurrection are the actualisation of his word and the fulfilment of Revelation” (John Paul II). (561)**
- **Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf. Gal 4:19). “For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him”. (562)**