

St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

AQA GCSE Religious Studies

Revision Booklet



Component 1: Catholic Christianity

Unit 2: Incarnation

1. What the Bible teaches about Jesus as incarnate Son and divine Word, fully God and fully human, Son of God and Son of Man.

The Meaning of the Incarnation



Incarnation means God taking on the human condition in Jesus. Therefore the Church teaches that God took on the full human condition in Jesus; Jesus was conceived, born naturally, grew up, learned, worked, hungered, feasted, felt fear and loss, suffered and died. Jesus was truly man. This shows that God loved humanity so much that he was prepared to share in it to the fullest extent. He can empathise with us and this helps Christians to value God's love.

The Annunciation

The angel Gabriel came to announce God's plan of sending his Son into the world. The message was given to a young virgin called Mary. It was not just for her however, but for the whole Jewish people as God was fulfilling the promises he had made to Abraham and his descendants.

The name chosen for the child was Jesus which in Hebrew means 'saviour'. Jesus is the Son of the 'Most High' which means God. The statement in the Bible that the child will reign over the house of Israel forever shows that all of God's promises will be fulfilled.

Mary's question: 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' is not a rejection of God's wishes but a request for information. The response means that Jesus is a unique gift from God. The power of God, his free gift or grace to the people, works through Mary to bring the Son of God into the world.

However, this gift must be freely accepted. Mary had the choice to accept the role of mother of Jesus or to reject it. Mary's words show her willing but humble acceptance of the role God wants her to play.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "**How can this be, since I am a virgin?**" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.**" ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "**Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.**" Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:26-38

The Role of Joseph in Jesus' Birth

Whereas Luke's Gospel focuses on the role of Mary, Matthew's looks at Joseph. He starts with a genealogy (generations in a family) from Abraham to Joseph. The key point is when it says: "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." This is the first indication that Jesus was not simply of human parentage. This story of Joseph is stressing that Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph is shown as someone who is willing To obey God's plan, no matter what it costs. When he hears of her pregnancy he saves Her 'shame' by not making it public. He is Then informed by God's messenger that the child is a child of God. For Jews it was the father's privilege to name a child but here God has chosen the name: Jesus, 'God saves'.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ **Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.** ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "**Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.**" ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "**God is with us.**" ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife.

Matthew 1:18-24

Jesus is shown here as the Son of God, who is present with his people as the one who saves. Jesus is also the fulfilment of the promises God made to his people through the prophets. The Virgin Birth stresses that while Jesus was fully human, getting his humanity from Mary, he was also fully God as he was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit'.

Comparing Matthew's and Luke's Accounts

Matthew	Luke
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Written for the Jewish people- woman had a limited role for Judaism at the time and no woman's evidence would have been accepted. This is probably why Matthew focused on Joseph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Written for non-Jewish Christians for whom the value of women was higher so Luke could write about Mary's role in Jesus' birth
Despite the differences, the message of both accounts is the same: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mary was a virginGod worked through human beings to enable his plan for humanity to come aboutJesus was conceived by the power of the Holy SpiritAn angel announced Jesus' birth	

Jesus, the Word of God

John's Gospel starts with an explanation of Jesus as the Word of God made flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us. John 1:1-4

John deliberately echoes the beginning of Genesis, the first account of creation. John uses the same words: 'In the beginning was the Word' while Genesis states: 'In the beginning when God created...'

<p>In the beginning was the Word: here John is showing that the Word existed before all things. While the other Gospels show what happened when the Word became human (as Jesus), John is stressing the further dimension that the Word is an eternal being.</p>	<p>The Word was God: a word comes from within a person and is an expression of what is inside that person. In the same way, the Word of God is inside of God and is God's self-expression. This is why it is true to say 'the Word was God'.</p>
<p>The Word was with God: this phrase indicates that while the Word and God are united and co-exist, there is also a distinction between them.</p> <p>The Word of God is how God expresses his power. It goes forth from God and is dynamic and creative. Everything that exists depends on the Word of God. The Word gives life, light and guidance to people, particularly to those who accept him.</p>	<p>The Word became flesh: this is the great statement of the incarnation: the Word became flesh and lived among us. The Word, the self-expression of God, took on human nature coming down to earth to live as a full human being.</p>
<p>The Word as an expression of love: the word 'grace' means 'free gift' and Jesus is God's free gift to humanity to help us learn to respond fully to God's love. Jesus came to bring people to the truth and so it was an offering for people to accept or reject. Christians believe that God did not force people to choose him; instead he stretches out his hands and hopes that people will accept his grace.</p>	

Note: Christians believe that Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, and therefore she is the Mother of God.

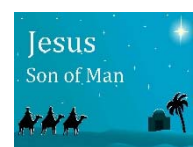
Jesus as both fully human and fully God

- **Jesus as the Son of Man**

The 4 Gospel writers, the evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), showed how Jesus experienced all the joys and trials of what it means to be human. Jesus was tempted (Mt 4:1-11), he ate and drank with all types of people (Lk 5:29-32), he pitied the widow (Lk 7:11-17), he wept when his friend Lazarus had died (Jn 11:28-36), he was troubled (Mk 14:32-42) and he suffered and died in agony (Mk 15:33-36). Jesus was fully human.

Sometimes Jesus talked about himself as the 'Son of Man'. This phrase was used in 2 ways in the Old Testament:

1. In a general way to refer to the speaker, just like in England some people use the word 'one' instead of 'I'. This how the prophet Ezekiel used it.



2. About a human who is taken up into heavenly court and given power over all the world. This is particularly the case in Daniel 7:13.

Sometime when Jesus used the term it was not clear whether he was referring to himself as a normal person (e.g. Lk 9:44) or as someone who has special authority from God (e.g. Lk 5:24 and Mk 2:28). However, when Jesus talked about himself and the suffering that he would have to endure, he used the phrase 'Son of Man'. If Jesus were not fully human, the pain and suffering that he predicted would not have bothered him. He warned his disciples about his coming suffering and death. This was not a future he looked forward to with pleasure but he trusted in God's promises that those who were faithful to God would be raised up to heaven.

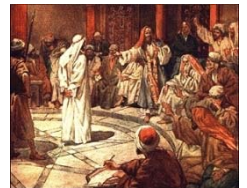
The he began to teach that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Mk 8:31

- **Jesus as the Son of God**

When Jesus was arrested and stood before the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin, he was at first silent as he followed Jewish law which stated that no accused person on trial could be asked a direct question and nothing that the accused said during the trial could be taken as evidence. The high priest however asked Jesus a question and he had to answer.

Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? Jesus said: I am. Mk 14:61-62

The words 'I am' are a translation of the phrase that God used to reveal himself to Moses (Exodus 3:14). In this reply Jesus acknowledged that he was the Son of God and had a share in God's power. But he also called himself the Son of Man, emphasising his humanity as well as his divinity.



In the resurrection, Jesus was raised to new life and sat at God's right hand. This means that he took his place as God. Nobody can become God, as God by definition has no beginning or end. The resurrection proves that Jesus was always God, but that during his life on earth he limited himself to the condition of a human being, with all that that involved.

In Jesus, God really became one of us and thus our brother; nevertheless, he did not cease to be God at the same time and thus our Lord. Youcat 77

Jesus worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Gaudium et Spes 22 – Vatican II



Note: be careful with the terms Son of Man and Son of God. In the context of Jesus' teachings and the Gospels, it would be wrong to say that 'Son of Man' is just talking about Jesus as a human being, as sometimes the term is meant to imply that Jesus has a share in God's power.


2. Why Christians use the symbols Ichthus, Alpha and Omega and Chi-Rho.

A symbol is a sign or a design that represents something else. Symbols are useful in religion as many religious ideas cannot easily be put into words. It can be difficult to portray complex, abstract truths about God and religious beliefs using limited, specific words.

One way to avoid the problems connected with expressing ideas through words is to use a representational symbol. Symbols are only intended to convey a vague idea of what they are pointing to. They direct the mind to something beyond themselves: something that cannot be fully explained but which may be sensed in abstract way.

Christianity has used many symbols during its existence. Catholicism values these symbols and uses them a lot in church design and the liturgical vestments (robes worn by the clergy). Three of the most common:

Ichthus (fish)		<p>In the early days of Christianity, when people could be persecuted for their faith, Christians use to quickly draw and erase the outline of a fish to show they were a Christian or to indicate where Christian prayer meetings were being held. The shape outline was easy to draw and only fellow Christians would recognise the symbolism.</p> <p>The Greek word ichthus means 'fish' but Christians use it to talk about Jesus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I is the first letter of the Greek word Iesous which means Jesus• Ch is the first letter of Christos, which means Christ• Th is the first letter of Theou, which means God• U is the first letter of (H)uios, which means Son• S is the first letter of Soter, which means saviour <p>Or: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. Only a Christian would make this declaration of faith about Jesus and so the fish symbol came to be used regularly among Christian believers.</p>
Alpha and Omega		<p>Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, while Omega is the last letter. Using these letters shows that God and Jesus are involved in everything from beginning to end. Their use goes back to at least the Book of Revelation, written towards the end of the first century.</p> <p><i>I am the Alpha and the Omega, 'says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:8</i></p> <p><i>Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.'</i> Revelation 21:6</p>

		The Alpha and Omega symbol can be used to refer to both God and Jesus. The symbol is used in many places in churches, vestments and drawings, but it has a special place on the Paschal (or Easter) Candle.
Chi-Rho		<p>The Chi-Rho is a monogram that was first used by the early Christians and is still widely used today. It is formed from the first 2 letter of the Greek word for Christ when written in capital letters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The letter chi = X • The letter rho = P <p>While the design does not technically form a cross shape, for Christians it is reminder of the death of Jesus. It is an affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one of God who was sent to save the world through his redeeming death. As such it has great power to inspire to a cross or crucifix as an expression of faith.</p>

3. How the belief that God became man has influenced Catholic attitudes to religious art.

Reasons against religious art

Some religions are reluctant to portray God and some forbid it. In both Judaism and Islam, for example, it is an offence to show God in any form. There are a number of reasons for this:

- God is infinite. It is impossible to show the infinite using finite means like art and sculptures.
- Jews and some Christian groups (e.g. Baptists and Methodists) believe that the second Commandment forbids people to make any form of statue or artistic representation of God: 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.' Exodus 20:4-5.
- When someone prays in front of a statue or picture, even though they are only using the image as a stimulus for prayer to God, other people get the impression that the statue or image is actually being worshipped as a god.
- Sometimes statues and images may give people wrong ideas about God, particularly when they are young. A common example of this is when people ask: 'Why is God an old man with a beard?' They mistake the image for the real thing.



Whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it. The honour paid to sacred images is a 'respectful veneration', not the adoration due to God alone. Catechism of the Catholic Church 2132

Michelangelo's La Pietà showing Mary holding Jesus' crucified body can help Christians relate to an important teaching in the Christian faith.

The Influence of the Incarnation

For Catholics, the incarnation – when God took on the human condition in Jesus – has provided a unique opportunity to portray God:

- God has taken on the limitations of human nature. It is therefore acceptable to reflect God in this limited form. As Jesus was a full human being, he can be shown in a human form. As Jesus is also God, it is acceptable to use human images to depict God.
- While we do not have any evidence of Jesus looked like, we know that he was a man with all the human qualities. Any representation of Jesus that captures these qualities has value.
- God became man for all people in the world. In fact Jesus was a Jew, but since Christians believe that all people are affected by the salvation that Jesus gave through his death and resurrection, they think it is reasonable to show Jesus as a member of any ethnicity.
- Artistic representations can help people focus on spiritual ideas and aspects of God's work. As a focus for prayer and inspiration, they have a very positive role in religious life.
- Some people believed that it is God's Holy Spirit that has inspired them to create a piece of art work while some simply do it to honour God.

Very rightly the fine arts are considered to rank among the noblest activities of man's genius and this applies to religious art...they achieve their purpose...as they are directed the exclusively to the single aim of turning men's minds devoutly to God.

Sacrosanctum Concilium 122

4. What one sculpture or statue of Jesus teaches about Jesus and explain different Christian attitudes to religious sculptures, statues and images of Jesus.

Note: make sure you know about one statue or sculpture of Jesus and understand what it is trying to say about Jesus. Here you have 3 to choose from.

Christ the Redeemer



This statue, completed in 1931, overlooks the city of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. You probably saw it at the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was largely paid for by the Catholic population of the city and it challenged the perceived 'godlessness' of society at the time, by reminding people of the continuing love of God.

The outstretched arms are a reminder of the cross on which Jesus accepted death and are a symbol of Jesus' love and obedience to God the father. They also show that Jesus' love takes in all people; there is nobody excluded from the love of God shown in Jesus Christ.



The Sacred Heart

The Sacred Heart statue is a statue of Jesus that usually features some or all of the following:

- Holes in the hands (from where he was nailed to the cross)
- One of his hands pointing to the heart that is shown on his breast
- An expression of peace and love
- A crown of thorns surrounding the heart, to represent the crown that was placed on Jesus' head when he was mocked by soldiers at his crucifixion
- A piercing through the heart, to echo the words from John's Gospel: 'one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear' (John 19:34)
- Flames coming through the heart, as a symbol of the burning love that Jesus has for all people

As the heart is used by many cultures to show a person's love, Sacred Heart statues reflect the total, self-giving human love that Jesus has for all people. The statues are intended to remind people of the words of Jesus: "I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

The final proof of Jesus' love was when he accepted death on the cross to save all people. This is why the symbols of Jesus' suffering (the crown of thorns, the nail marks and the piercing) are shown on this statue.



The Crucifix

One of the most popular representations of Jesus is the crucifix. It is a reminder of the pain and suffering that Jesus went through as he died. Jesus' death was redemptive, which means that through his willing obedience to God, Jesus freed all people from the power of sin and death. When Catholics look at the crucifix, they remember the love of God cancelled the sin of all humans, giving everybody the chance of eternal life with God.

There are a variety of forms of the crucifix. Some focus on the intense agony that Jesus went through, sometimes depicting his dead body. Sometimes Jesus is dressed in priest's vestments, showing that he is offering the sacrifice of his life to God for the sake of humanity. Sometimes Jesus is dressed in kingly robes, wearing a crown, showing that through his suffering and death, Jesus gained eternal victory over sin and death.

Different Christian attitudes to Sculptures, Statues and Images of Jesus

- Some Christians believe that it is wrong to depict Jesus in art as the second commandment forbids using images in worship.
- Some think that it is impossible to know what Jesus looked like, so it is wrong to depict him in any physical way.
- Jesus as the Son of God is infinite. Some believe therefore that it is wrong to limit Jesus' divinity by depicting his humanity.

- However, some Christians believe that a statue of Jesus can help people concentrate on aspects of Jesus' teachings and life.

5. How Jesus fulfils the law, and how he shows people how to live through his actions, attitudes and teachings.

Throughout his teachings Jesus brought his followers to a new understanding of the law. He said: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil' (Matthew 5:17). Jesus showed his followers a deeper appreciation of the call to love God, not just through observing the commandments but also through a change of attitude, which in turn affects people's actions.

The Beatitudes

⁵ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
¹¹ "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
Matthew 5:1-12

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is the new lawgiver, building upon the law given to Moses in the Old Testament. Jesus opens his sermon with a call to change their attitudes. This is known as the Beatitudes.

The old law was given so that people could knowhow to respond to God's will. Jesus transforms this law by focusing on what people's attitudes should be. If people have the right attitude towards God, themselves and their fellow human beings, they will do the right thing and will therefore be pleasing to God.

Christians believe that Jesus took the old law and made it more perfect. People are not just to avoid murder, they are to avoid being angry with their neighbour. Instead of not committing adultery, no lustful thought is to be allowed to develop, as this is the first step to adultery. These rules might appear difficult but the point is that if you are careful over the smaller issues, the bigger temptations will not develop. This puts humans in control.

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats



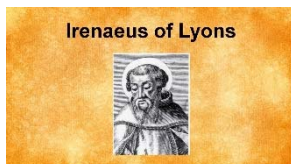
Jesus taught that having the right attitude would allow his followers to care for other people. In this parable, Jesus tells his followers that they must care for people who are in need. Jesus identifies himself as one of these people. He says that anyone who claims that they are following him, but who ignores the needs of other people, will not go to heaven, while anyone who does care will be rewarded and taken to heaven. This is why the parable is also called the Last Judgement.

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a]you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Matthew 25:31-46

6. What St. Irenaeus meant when he wrote, 'the glory of is a human being, fully alive.'

For Catholics, tradition is part of the 2000 year heritage that has helped Christians to understand more fully what God has revealed. During this time many Catholics have accepted that many people have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. The fact that their teachings have been accepted down the ages, and have been part of Catholic tradition, reassures Catholics that what they said is in accordance with the will of God.



From the earliest days of Christianity, people have believed that the incarnation was more than just showing God's love but instead it also showed the importance of the human race. St Irenaeus who dies at the start of the third century showed how Jesus, the incarnate Word, is a meeting point between God and humanity.

In *Adversus Haereses* 4:20:7, St Irenaeus taught that:

- The Son (Jesus) was with the Father (God) from the beginning – echoed in John 1:1-3.
- The Son, as the Word of God, was the one who spoke through the Old Testament prophets and inspired people through visions and dreams.
- It is through the Word (Jesus) that humans receive God's free gift: his grace.
- The Word (Jesus) shows people what the Father is like. God is beyond human sight; he is invisible because God is unlimited and humans can only see limited things. But people can get to know God in and through Jesus. This is also shown in the words of Jesus himself: 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9), and St Paul's statement about Jesus: 'He is the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15).

- The qualities that humans value in Jesus are also the qualities that are found in God. This means that humans can get a true, though limited, understanding of the nature of God through the life and actions of Jesus. God is not hidden from humans.
- These qualities also appear in most people unless we choose them not to be – choice and free will. The difference is that in Jesus these qualities are shown in their purest form. Jesus is not only truly God; he is truly human, showing human qualities in their most perfect state.
- Jesus is the perfect human being. He is totally open to the working of God in his life. He sets the example that all people are called to follow. He is the one who is fully alive and so it is true to say of Jesus, as of all people who are open to God, ‘Life in man is the glory of God’.

St Irenaeus said:

He (Jesus) revealed God to men and presented men to God.

Life in man is the glory of God; the life of man is the vision of God.

7. How the incarnation is talked about in *Dei Verbum* 4 and *Verbum Domini* 12.

Jesus as fully God and fully man

It has always been a concern for Christianity to present Jesus both fully God and fully man:

- When the focus is too much on Jesus as God, there is a tendency to slip into the mistaken belief or heresy that Jesus only *appeared* to be human; that he was basically God in disguise.
- When the focus is too much on Jesus as man, there is a tendency to slip into the heresy that Jesus was not really God, just a very good human being.

The Catholic Church teaches that both of these positions are wrong. However, it can sometimes be difficult in one document to present belief that Jesus is both fully God and fully man, keeping the right balance between the two. Two documents from the Magisterium in the last sixty years have tried to show Jesus as fully human and fully God.

Dei Verbum 4

The Word made flesh was sent as ‘a man to men’.

God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to eternal life.

This passage shows that:

- God is revealed in Jesus and speaks through Jesus. As ‘God with us’, Jesus defeats sin and brings salvation to all people.
- At the same time, Jesus is also sent as a man to be among his people; this stresses his human nature.



Verbum Domini 8

The Son himself is the Word of God, the Logos: the eternal word became small – small enough to fit into a manger.

The new Adam, the true man, who unfailingly does not his own will but that of the Father...

In his apostolic exhortation, Pope Benedict XVI shows how:

- The incarnation meant that the Word of God deliberately limited himself so that humans could make sense of God's love. This is most forcibly asserted in the phrase 'the eternal Word became small...'
- As a human being, Jesus was fully in tune with the will of God: he always chose to do God's will, no matter what it cost him.
- It was through the very human act of dying that Jesus gave himself into God's hands. This led to the resurrection and the glorification of Jesus as the Christ.

Francis, a 62 year old vicar, said: "As far as I am concerned, if Jesus was not a full human being, if he only pretended to be human, he can do nothing for me because he doesn't know me or where I am. But he has to be God as well as man otherwise I would still be stuck in my sins."

8. What the belief that Jesus is God incarnate teaches about grace and the sacramental nature of reality.

The Meaning of Grace

The term 'grace' comes from the Latin word 'gratis' meaning free. Christians believe it is the free gift of God himself to all people. Grace is the life-force of the Trinity, the mutual love of the Father for the Son in the Holy Spirit. This love that unites the three Persons of the Trinity is dynamic: it makes things happen. It is also creative: it pours out from the Trinity and gives life to all things. It is poured into people's hearts to allow them to share in the divine life. The believer has the ability to reject or to ignore this gift but it is always available to those who choose to accept it.

Christians believe that no person can deserve or earn God's grace. Grace is God's free self-communication to humanity. The incarnation is the ultimate sign of God's love, since he freely gave his Son to the human race as a sign and pledge of his eternal acceptance of humanity. Grace is also the inward call of God to respond to God's love, by doing God's will and being close to God at all times.

Humans are sinful, yet God's grace is poured into the human heart to call each person to a deeper relationship with God. Each of the sacraments is a moment of grace: a time when a person may receive this gift of God in a more complete manner. Grace enables people to become aware of what God wants for each of them. It also strengthens individuals to do what God wants.

Grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us.
(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1996)

God's love wants our free assent.
(Youcat 340)



Grace and the Incarnation

For Christians, Jesus gave the perfect example in the incarnation of how to live according to God's will and love.

The incarnation makes people aware of the presence of God among humans. Even though Jesus is no longer present as a human being on earth, his Spirit is fully active. The Spirit continues to work in the hearts and minds of believers, sharing the life and love of God with all people, directly through grace and in the loving actions performed by other people.

Christians believe that the gift of the incarnation and the gift of grace are two aspects of God's gift of love to the human race.

The Power of God's *Grace*

- **Grace Empowers our Salvation**
➔ Ephesians 2:8, John 1:12
- **Grace Empowers Christ-like Living**
➔ Titus 2:11-12
- **Grace Empowers us to abound and be generous in giving**
➔ 2 Corinthians 9:8,14
- **Grace Empowers us to serve God**
➔ Hebrews 12:28
- **Grace empowers our Christian ministry and labor**
➔ 1 Cor 15:10
- **Grace empowers those who are weak**
➔ 2 Corinthians 12:8-9
- **Grace empowers our relationship with God**
➔ Romans 5:1-2
- **Grace Empowers us in times of need**
➔ Hebrews 4:16

Through Jesus Christ

The Sacramental Nature of Reality

For Christians, the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus are the transforming events in all of creation. The whole of Christian life is based around the idea that God became man, died and rose for all human beings.

In the incarnation, God and man are united and the whole of creation is made holy. This holiness is an enduring reality. This reality includes and goes beyond creation in all its aspects, as it covers both the physical and spiritual dimensions. Jesus promised: 'I am with you always, to the end of the age' (Matthew 28:20). This promised presence of Christ is seen in those things that he has established, noticeably the Church and the sacraments.

A sacrament is an 'outward sign of inward grace ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls' (*A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*). The whole of creation is infused with the presence of God, not just because God created it but because God's presence in Jesus has touched it and made it holy. Just as Jesus is the sacrament – or sign – of God's presence here on earth, so the whole of reality can be seen as a sacrament of God's love. Before the incarnation, humans could only appreciate God as a distant, though caring, being. Since Jesus has lived on earth, Christians are able to see God as a living and active presence.

9. How the seven sacraments help make life holy for Catholics.

The Seven Sacraments

There are 7 sacraments in the Catholic Church as shown below. Each sacrament not only symbolises the giving of grace but through the sacrament itself, grace is actually given to the believer. Grace is the life of God given freely which increases in the believer every time a sacrament is received. The sacrament originates in the work and teaching of Jesus.

Sacrament	Action	Symbolism/effect	Words
Baptism	The pouring of water	The cleansing of sins	<i>I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.</i>
Confirmation	The anointing of the forehead with chrism (holy oil)	Receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit	<i>Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.</i>
Eucharist	The receiving of the consecrated Bread and Wine – the Body and Blood of Christ	Receiving the fullness of Christ	<i>This is my body. This is my blood.</i>
Marriage	The consent	Each partner accepting the other person as husband/wife for life	<i>Will you (name), take (name) here present as your lawful wedded husband/wife according to the rites of our Holy Mother the Church? I will</i>
Ordination	The laying on of hands with chrism	Conferring the dignity of the priesthood	<i>Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood.</i>
Reconciliation	The laying on of hands	The passing on of God's power and forgiveness	<i>I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father...</i>
Sacrament of the Sick	The anointing of the head and hands (the senses) with the oil of the sick	Strengthening and forgiveness	<i>Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen.</i>



Each of the sacraments is seen as a meeting point with God. For Christians they are an opportunity to welcome Christ into their lives at important moments, sometimes as a one-off event and sometimes as a regular event.

The sacraments help to build up the holiness of the individual. They sanctify the life of the believer, helping to make the person a stronger witness of the love and presence of God. Each of the sacraments strengthens the relationship with God in a different way:

- In **Baptism** a person becomes a child of God.
- In **Confirmation** the faith is strengthened and the power of the Holy Spirit is renewed in the life of the believer.
- Through the **Eucharist** the life of Christ is received, enabling the believer to grow in God's love.
- In **Marriage** the couple accept that their love for each other is the love of God active in their lives.
- In **Ordination** the priest commits himself to God and the Church. He is given the power to consecrate Mass, to preach and to forgive sins.
- In **Reconciliation** the believer rejects those areas of life that have damaged the relationship with God and this relationship is restored.
- In the **Sacrament of the Sick** the sick are made aware of the strength and love of Christ with them in their time of need.

Note: The Eucharist, Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Sick can be received regularly. Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination can only be received once. For Catholics, Marriage cannot be received a second time while your partner is still alive.

10. How the idea of human beings *imago dei* influences Catholic beliefs about the protection of the unborn.

The Concept of Imago Dei

Genesis 1:27 says: 'God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.' The Latin phrase for 'Image of God' is 'Imago Dei'. This phrase is often used in debates about the nature of human beings. Catholic teachings stress that because all humans are made in *Imago Dei*, all humans are holy and should be respected and protected.

Shortly after the annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) when Mary had conceived Jesus, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. At this point Elizabeth was a little over six months pregnant with John (the Baptist). At Mary reached Elizabeth's house and greeted her, the Gospel says: 'When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy.' (Luke 1:41-42)



God therefore is the sole Lord of this life: man cannot do with it as he wills. (Evangelium Vitae 39)

For Catholics, these verses show that Jesus was truly present in his mother's womb from the moment of his conception. Catholic teaching says the same fact applies to all humans.



For Catholics, human life begins at the moment of conception. From this moment the whole person is present. All that happens afterwards is that the baby develops following its natural course. There is never a moment when anything extra is added to change the nature of what is developing in the womb. The relationship between the foetus from conception to birth is just the same as the relationship between a 4 year old girl and the 84 grandmother she becomes.

Development and changes take place, but it is the same person who is being developed and changed. This means that it is one person who is conceived, develops and eventually dies. This person is *Imago Dei* at every step of the way.

Catholic Views on Abortion

Many Catholics feel that it is their duty to ensure that all children are allowed to live full lives. Many belong to pro-life organisations like SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and Life. Pro-life organisations campaign to reduce the abortion limit – the point at which an abortion becomes illegal during a pregnancy – or to ban abortion completely.

Many Catholics also support organisations and individuals that care for women who have decided not to abort their child but who are having problems, possibly financial or emotional, during pregnancy and in the early years after the child is born.



Catholics also believe that children with severe disabilities are loved by God and should be cared for as well as possible throughout their natural lives. *Imago Dei* does not mean that everybody looks perfect; it means that every person has divine qualities that must not be destroyed.

Teachings:

From the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes. (Gaudium et Spes 51)

I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child. Mother Teresa