

CHAPTER 17

True God and True Man

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father.”

John 1:14

After talking so much about Christ's divinity, we must spend some time on his humanity as well. Although the Jews and other people found it hard to believe that Jesus was God, today some people find it hard to realize that Jesus is truly man. Some of the statues and pictures of Jesus that we see can give Jesus a stiff, unreal look. We sometimes think that Jesus was not really a man but, rather, God “disguised” as a man. This is not true at all. If it were, Jesus would never have felt hunger, thirst, or the need for sleep. But in fact he felt all of these things. More importantly, God had to become man in order to save mankind from sin. The Gospels give us many glimpses of a Savior who was fully human: getting tired of having too many people around at times, falling asleep in a boat while the Apostles battled a storm, enjoying the company of little children, building a campfire and fixing breakfast for his Apostles. Jesus took part in everything our human life has to offer. As the Epistle to the Hebrews states, he was “like us in all things but sin.”

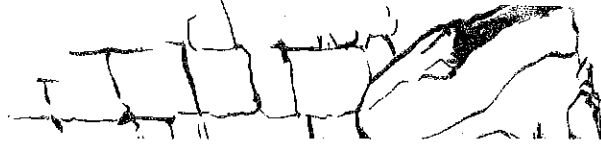
The Son of God existed from all eternity. At a certain point in history, he took on a

human nature and was born of the Virgin Mary. This is called the **Incarnation**. (A human nature includes not only a body but a human mind and soul as well.) Jesus has two natures, divine and human. Yet, he remains one person, not two. You will remember from Chapter Two that “**nature**” means “what you are” and “**person**” means “who you are.” If you asked Jesus, “What are you?” he would say, “God and man.” We do not know exactly how the union of the divine and human natures works. We call this union of natures the *hypostatic* union from the Greek word the Fathers of the Church used to describe it. It is one of the mysteries of our Faith which we will not fully understand even in heaven, though we will understand it much better there.

In his love, the Father sent Jesus to be an example for us. It is one thing to hear sermon after sermon about obeying God's law. But Jesus taught us how to obey the Father by the way he lived. He showed real love to everyone. He forgave his enemies. Most importantly, he obeyed his Father in everything. Obedience is hard for all of us. It may mean setting aside our own plans and wishes to

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carry out those of someone else. It may mean doing things we do not like, and doing them for the reason that God has told us to do so.

But God's own Son showed us that he, too, would humbly obey God's plan for him. As man, Jesus did not like the idea of pain and death any more than the rest of us. But he wanted to do the will of his Father whom he loved, so he went to his death freely and bravely. When we remember that even God's Son, the Lord of the Universe, was willing to obey, it should help us to obey as well.

Jesus became man in order to be not just our Savior but also our brother and friend. We can talk to him about our joys, our problems, and our temptations. He will always understand. If ever we are not sure what to do, we can ask in prayer, "Jesus, what would you do if this

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where we are going;

Christ as Man is the way by which
we go.

—Saint Augustine

happened to you?" Then he will remind us of what is right and wrong, and he will give us the courage to do what is right. If we should fall into sin, we can turn to Jesus, knowing he wants to forgive us and restore us to his friendship.

Words to Know:

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Q. 76 *How did the Son of God become man?*

The Son of God became man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is called the Incarnation (CCC 484-85).

Q. 77 *Did the Son of God cease being God when he became man?*

No, when the Son of God became man he did not cease being God but was true God and true man at the same time (CCC 470-71).

Q. 78 *Are there two natures in Jesus Christ?*

Yes, in Jesus Christ there are two natures: a divine nature and a human nature (CCC 469, 471).

Q. 79 *Are there two persons in Jesus Christ?*

No, in Jesus Christ there is only one Divine Person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ (CCC 468-80).

Q. 80 *Did the Son of God always exist?*

The Son of God has always existed. He became man at the moment of the Incarnation (CCC 479).

