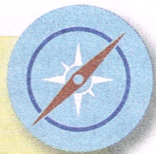


Journey of Faith



In Short:

- Christ is the way to the Father and salvation.
- Jesus is fully human and fully divine.
- You can have a personal relationship with Jesus.



"Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'"

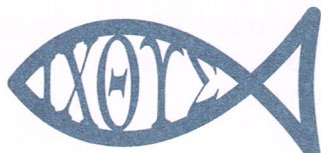
CCC 424

"To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith."

CCC 202

Who Is Jesus Christ?

What do you see in the image at right? Early Christians used the fish symbol as a secret code indicating they were followers of Jesus. Sometimes the fish's eye was a tiny cross. You also see the Greek acronym **ichthys**. Each letter (*iota, chi, theta, upsilon, sigma*) begins the words in the title "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." When early Christians saw the fish or ichthys, they knew immediately they had met another Christian and were safe from persecution. They belonged to each other and to the Lord.



While the Catholic faith uses many symbols to illustrate deeper truths, our faith is founded in the living person of Jesus Christ. Jesus binds us to God and to each other. Christ alone gives meaning to our faith, and every belief and practice points to him, interrelating with the others to make up a complete and full expression of the truth.

Jesus' True Identity

Jesus' earthly existence is undeniable; historical research has established the approximate date and place of his birth, as well as the circumstances surrounding his crucifixion. Those around him felt certain of his origins, calling him "the carpenter, the son of Mary" and "the Nazarene" (Mark 6:3; 14:67; see also Matthew 13:55).

The real question, then, lies in whether Jesus is God—whether his miracles, teachings, death, and resurrection have real and lasting meaning for all humanity. Even in his own time and region, many were skeptical. The Jews were awaiting the Messiah, but they expected a mighty warrior. They never imagined their savior would have such humble beginnings. When Jesus asked his apostles, "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27), answers varied. Peter replied, "the Messiah." Jesus didn't deny this identification but "warned them not to tell anyone" (8:29–30).

Messiah: In Hebrew, “anointed” (Greek, *christos*). The one foretold by prophets who would deliver God’s people from their enemies, sin, and evil and establish a kingdom of justice and salvation. Similar to *savior*, this term originally had a clear political sense but later was revealed to have deeper, more supernatural implications.

“Know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Acts 2:36

- *If Jesus is God and Savior, what does that mean for your life?*



Only Jesus can reveal the secret of his person. If we are to understand him, we must let Jesus speak for himself.

How did Jesus describe himself?

John 4:25–26

John 6:48

John 8:12

John 10:14–15

John 11:25–27

John 15:1

John 17:1–3

- *Which of the verses from John’s Gospel has the most meaning for you? Why?*



Jesus Is the Way

“I am the way and the truth and the life.”

John 14:6

Jesus’ identity and role can be difficult to understand and accept, yet over thousands of years, billions of people around the globe have called themselves followers of Christ. Many have changed or lost their lives because of it.

It’s important to realize that Jesus was a faithful Jew. The Jews possessed a deep knowledge of God. Drawing on this background, Jesus shared many sayings that were taught by the prophets and Jewish rabbis. For example, Jesus taught that we should pray in secret (Matthew 6:6). A Jewish saying shares a similar message: “He who prays within his house surrounds it with a wall that is stronger than iron.”

What made Jesus unique, then, isn’t his teaching. Jesus is unique because *he is the Son of God*. He not only called people to hear and heed his message, but also to believe in him! That was completely new; prophets and teachers had never before demanded belief in themselves. They wanted to kill him, we’re told, because he “called God his own Father, making himself equal to God” (John 5:18).

Jesus placed himself above the Jewish religious leaders and practices. He claimed to be the way to God and the complete fulfillment of Jewish teachings and prophecies. He said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17; see also Luke 24:44).

- *To what or where do Jesus’ life and teachings lead you?*
- *How has he guided your life so far?*



Jesus Is the Truth

"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth."

John 18:37

Jesus says, "I am the truth," not "I speak the truth" or "I reveal the truth," but "I am the truth." As son of Mary and Son of God, Jesus' human and divine natures cannot be separated. Unlike religious leaders and saints throughout history, he is never "off duty" or subject to sin and flaws. Every word, every action, every gesture, every emotion is full of meaning and truth. Jesus invites us to have a personal relationship with him—and in him and through him, a relationship with the Father.

"To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement."

St. Augustine

Jesus came to show us God in human terms—to make the Father present to all.

How does Jesus describe his relationship with the Father in John's Gospel?

John 1:18

John 5:37–38

John 6:46

John 8:38

- What would it mean for you to have a personal relationship with Jesus? Does this seem more appealing or uncomfortable? Why?



Jesus Is the Life

The greatest treasure we have is life itself. Our earthly life is fragile, limited, and temporary, but Christ offers us a full and everlasting life. For many, it takes a close encounter with our own limits or mortality to seek the life Christ offers and true salvation.

How does Jesus show himself to be the life in the following Scripture passages:

Matthew 16:25

Mark 8:35

John 1:3–4

John 5:21, 24

John 6:53

John 10:10

John 17:1–2

This life includes being filled with the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of life" (Nicene Creed). Jesus promised to send the Spirit. When he came upon the apostles at Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus' resurrection at Easter, they were filled with new life—the life of the risen Christ.

"I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me."

Galatians 2:20

Jesus continues to promise his life and Spirit to anyone who wishes to be united to him. Having a personal relationship with Christ, which includes prayer and the sacraments, is how disciples embrace the Trinity and prepare for life after death.

The Miracles of Jesus

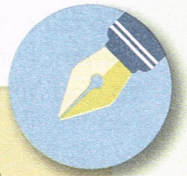
Miracle: An event that cannot be explained by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered the work of a divine agent.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus cures the sick and injured, commands nature, multiplies food, and even raises the dead. He didn't perform miracles to demonstrate his power, gain authority, or impress anyone. He performed most of them away from the crowds and in the presence of only a few. He frequently told witnesses not to tell anyone what they had seen. Rather, his miracles seem to have two purposes:

1. To serve as signs of his divinity and mission, that God's kingdom has arrived, and that God's love is present and at work (see John 10:24–39 and 14:11).
2. To affirm and strengthen those who already have faith (see Matthew 15:21–28 and Luke 8:40–56).

Read the Gospel passages below, then discuss whether each miracle serves as a sign of Jesus' divinity and mission, an affirmation of faith, or both:

- Wedding at Cana (water into wine; John 2:1–11)
- Cleansing of a leper (Matthew 8:1–4)
- Healing the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1–10)
- Healing Jairus' daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage (Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56)
- Loaves and fish, feeding 5,000 (Matthew 14:13–21)
- Walking on water (Mark 6:45–52)



Write a letter to Jesus. Talk to him as you would to a friend or your spouse.

What would you like to share with Jesus this week?

What difficulties or joys would you discuss with him?

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