

Which image do you most easily relate to?

The Good Shepherd



“I know my own and they know me”.

Do you see him as the Shepherd who leaves The ninety-nine and Goes looking for the One that is lost?



The Sacred Heart

Jesus as the man whose heart overflows with love for all that he meets.



The Teacher

“They were spellbound by his teaching, for his words had authority”.

Jesus as Servant

Jesus is called to serve Mankind. Jesus comes to join Where we are, in the midst Of our sin. It is from this That he rescues us.



Christ Crucified

“Christ became obedient for us even to death”.

Some people relate best to Christ on the cross, Especially those who are suffering themselves.



Do you have a preferred image?
How do you relate to Jesus in prayer?
If he came back in his human form, where would he go first?
How can we as a community be like him?

THE GOD WHO SPOKE

3



He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.
He worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty, and then for three years
He was an itinerant preacher.
He never wrote a book.
He never held political office.
He never owned a home.
Public opinion finally turned against him.
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

“WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?”

JESUS SON OF GOD

One of the key moments in our understanding of Jesus comes in John's gospel: Christ as the Word made flesh. In Genesis, all things are created by the Word of God. In John's Gospel we are told, the Word was made flesh. God became a man. This is what we mean by the **incarnation**. It is what we celebrate at Christmas. It is popular devotions such as the Christmas crib (started by St Francis) that remind us of this. That he was truly human is as important as the belief that he was truly divine. But what of his divinity?

Even though we are used to praying to Jesus as God, if someone asked for evidence of his divinity, what would we say? It would be a mistake to assume that when he was living and working in Palestine, everyone accepted that Jesus was God. In fact, the references to Jesus as God in the scriptures are few. So how do we know?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus is referred to as son of man, messiah, prophet, son of God, but never "God". The title Jesus seemed to prefer was "the son", speaking of God as "Father". The Jews spoke of God as the father of their nation, but Jesus spoke of God as Father with a special and personal intimacy that shocked people at the time (the nearest we could get to the term Jesus used is "Daddy"). But this does not necessarily mean that Jesus is divine. But there are three other ways that show he is.



1. Jesus showed himself to be God by **doing** the things of God. One instance was the Law. No-one could tamper with the Law. It was sacred, given by God. Yet Jesus uses and even changes the Law in a way that suggests he has control over it (Lk. 6:1-11). The enemies of Jesus clearly state that only God can forgive sins. Without hesitation Jesus shows that he has this power (Lk. 5:17-26; 7:49-50). **Only God** has power over life and death. Yet by his own authority Jesus raises the dead. (Lk. 8:49 f, Jn.11).

The Hebrew way of thinking was different to ours. They would be more inclined to consider the ways in which God acts and his powers rather than by his "divine nature". The Old Testament is a good example of God described according to what He does and his power.

2. This understanding of Jesus is gradually developed. The letter to the Hebrews looks more at the divine nature of Jesus. Also, John's gospel chapters 1 and 5:19-26 and John's first letter ch.1. Here Jesus is clearly put on a level footing with the Father God.

3. There is also the resurrection of Jesus as a proof of his divinity. This had such an impact on his followers, turning their worlds upside down. It was from this moment that all other earlier events made sense to them. It was from this moment that they knew their lives and their faith could never be the same again. It was from this moment that they began to worship Jesus as their God. As Thomas said: 'My Lord and my God'. It is their faith that has been passed on to us.

THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD – THE TRINITY

We can only know God through his revelation; that is, through his giving of himself to us. This means we come to know God by encountering/experiencing him, through what He tells us and by reflecting on it. This leads us to look at the Old Testament, the New Testament and at our own experiences as Christians. What conclusions can be made?



That God is one, we know. Yet the Church has also been led to another inevitable conclusion; that we experience/know Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God, three persons ("persons" does not mean "people". It comes from the Latin word "persona" which meant an actor's mask; this mask showed the audience his/her role. It now describes our experience of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the real distinction made known by Jesus; each is unique and real; we can't just swap one for another).

The Trinity cannot be fully explained because God is 'mystery'. Entering a relationship with God leads to adventure. If we think more in terms of discovery and less in terms of a problem we will be on the right path.