

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

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An initiative of the
Greek Orthodox
Metropolis of Chicago

PARISH GUIDE



THE PERSON
OF CHRIST

1. Sunday Announcement Talking Points

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Series Overview, How to Use, and Episode Guide

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THE PERSON OF CHRIST

SUNDAY ANNOUNCEMENT

TALKING POINTS

The Metropolis has created Living Water Productions, through which it will produce high-quality religious education productions, including short videos, podcasts, films and documentaries.

Living Water will create religious education in a format more engaging for modern audiences.

The first Living Water production is “The Person of Christ,” which consists of 12 videos, each only 4-5 minutes long. They can be watched individually or as a series.

The series was developed by world renowned theologian, Fr. Alexis Torrance, the Archbishop Demetrios Associate Professor of Byzantine Theology at the University of Notre Dame and Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne in Constantinople.

The Person of Christ series offers a deeper, spiritual and intellectual understanding of Christ.

The Person of Christ” is designed to be used in group settings, such as Bible Study groups, religious education classes and youth groups, as well as for the Orthodox Christian faithful, those wishing to convert to the faith, and those interested in deepening their understanding of Christianity.

The “Person of Christ” video series can be accessed through the Metropolis’ YouTube Channel.

Each parish is being provided study materials developed by Fr. Torrance. These are to be used with your groups.

We will be organizing study groups to start using the The Person of Christ video series.

LEARN MORE:
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THE PERSON OF CHRIST

SUNDAY BULLETIN ADS



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Who is Jesus Christ? The Metropolis of Chicago invites you to ask and answer the question for yourself through a new video series **"The Person of Christ"**.

Delivered by Fr. Alexis Torrance, the Archbishop Demetrios Associate Professor of Byzantine Theology at the University of Notre Dame, the video series is intended for Orthodox Christian faithful, as well as faith seekers, to deepen knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ.

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Who is Jesus Christ? The Metropolis of Chicago invites you to ask and answer the question for yourself through a new video series **"The Person of Christ"**.

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THE PERSON OF CHRIST

TIP SHEET

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE PERSON OF CHRIST VIDEO SERIES?

Delivered by Fr. Alexis Torrance, the Archbishop Demetrios Associate Professor of Byzantine Theology at the University of Notre Dame, the video series is intended for Orthodox Christian faithful, as well as faith seekers, to deepen knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ.

For this outcome to be realized, it will require both a spiritual and intellectual understanding of Jesus Christ, one that is best cultivated within a religious community. For this reason, we highly recommend viewing the videos and discussing them in a group setting. The series currently contains 12 short (apx 4-5 minute videos) that give viewers a deeper, richer understanding of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is recommended that they be watched in order, but it is possible to view each as a stand-alone entity. A detailed overview of the videos can be found in section 3.

WHO IS FATHER ALEXIS TORRANCE?

Alexis Torrance received his undergraduate and graduate training in Theology at the University of Oxford. He has held research fellowships at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington DC. He has been a member of the faculty at Notre Dame since 2014. His research interests gravitate around the fields of Greek Patristic, Byzantine, and Orthodox Theology, with a special focus on the areas of Christology, theological anthropology, ascetic thought, and East-West relations. He is currently developing a project on the nature and practice of theology in the middle and late Byzantine periods, with a view to bringing the findings into conversation with modern Orthodox thought. He was ordained to the priesthood in the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2020 and is a Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne.

Learn more:

Video links, worksheets, further reading and more can be found at:
chicago.goarch.org/PersonofChrist

Interested in more programs like this? Explore other “Living Water” projects at
chicago.goarch.org/living-water



THE PERSON OF CHRIST TIP SHEET

SECTION 2: HOW TO USE

The Person of Christ Video Series may be utilized in many ways. Below are some recommended integrations into your parish.

1. STAND-ALONE BIBLE STUDY

GROUP SIZE: Number of participants may vary, though we recommend max 15 people in order to best allow for clear viewing of the videos and ease of discussion.

EPISODES: Depending on the intended length of the Bible study we recommend focusing on between 1-3 episodes per session. We recommend viewing videos in order.

VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON?: The Person of Christ video series may be viewed in either capacity. For in-person sessions, we recommend having a screen to present episodes. The video series is also a great resource for virtual Bible-study sessions as computer screen-sharing can be used for presenting episodes.

WORKSHEETS: We have created a series of worksheets with questions for further reflection. These worksheets can be found along with each video at chicago.goarch.org/PersonofChrist

PROCESS: While all viewing methods are encouraged, we recommend:

- i. Introducing the topic of the day to your study group and encouraging participants to share their initial thoughts on the topic prior to viewing the episode.
- ii. Share the questions for reflection and discussion from the worksheet prior to viewing the video in order to prepare later conversations
- iii. View the video and encourage participants to take notes while viewing
- iv. Open discussion on initial thoughts after viewing
- v. Lead guided discussion of reflection questions from worksheets
- vi. If time allows, read passages from “Further Reading” section of worksheet and allow for open discussion



THE PERSON OF CHRIST TIP SHEET

2. ADD-ON TO EXISTING BIBLE STUDY

The Person of Christ Video Series expands our understanding of Christ through a range of different subtopics (examples, “The Cornerstone”, “The body and the temple”, “Priesthood” etc). Should your bible studies touch upon any of these topics, or if you are reading any of the passages from the “Further Reading” section of the worksheets, viewing the related video can enrich your bible study experience and add depth to group discussion.

GROUP SIZE: Number of participants may vary, though we recommend max 15 people in order to best allow for clear viewing of the videos and ease of discussion.

WORKSHEETS: we have created a series of worksheets with questions for further reflection. These worksheets can be found along with each video at chicago.goarch.org/PersonofChrist. While there may not always be time to review worksheets when viewing videos as an addition to a current bible study experience, we do recommend sharing the resource with participants so they may choose to explore on their own.

3. INDEPENDENT STUDY OR AMONG FRIENDS

For those looking to further understand our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through independent study, we have created a series of worksheets with questions for further reflection. These worksheets can be found along with each video at chicago.goarch.org/PersonofChrist.

While all viewing methods are encouraged, we recommend:

- i. Preparing yourself for viewing the video by reading through the reflection questions first.
- ii. Taking notes while viewing the film
- iii. Utilizing journaling in your time of reflection. Having a record of your initial thoughts will be useful when viewing later episodes.
- iv. Further expanding the experience by reading the selections in “Further Readings” (found at the bottom of each worksheet page).

4. SHARING WITH THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN CONVERTING OR GETTING MARRIED IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX FAITH

These videos are a great resource for those looking to learn more about Greek Orthodoxy. We recommend sharing the series with interested people either for their own independent study or as a resource to use during conversations about converting or marriage preparations.



SECTION 3: VIDEO EPISODE OVERVIEW

1. The person of Christ: Introduction; *Who do you say that I am?*

The person of Christ is the very basis of our faith. We can never tire of learning more about Him. He is the cause of our wonder. As Christians we often hear his names and titles. Some are more familiar to us, others less so: Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Temple, Light, Shepherd, King, and so on. In this course we will look in more detail at some of these titles.

RUN TIME: 4:25

LINK: <https://youtu.be/jYudCUMxcow>

2. The Power of the Name: Jesus

The Bible begins and ends with the idea of naming. Genesis 2 describes humanity being entrusted with the task to name the animals. Revelation 2 speaks of a new name given to those who believe in Christ. Names are powerful because they indicate a relationship. When we take a name in vain, especially the Lord's name, we are rupturing a relationship. This episode explores the importance within the act of naming.

RUN TIME: 4:17

LINK: <https://youtu.be/bGIJwjc2844>

3. Jesus THE Christ

Christ. Messiah. Anointed One. Three titles that share the same meaning. This episode explains what definitively separates Jesus as the Christ from any other "anointed one" (like King David); the fact that he is both the one who is anointed, and the one who anoints.

RUN TIME: 4:14

LINK: <https://youtu.be/wF8nSi-Wx0o>

4. The Stone the Builders Rejected: The Cornerstone

On the basis of Psalm 118:22, the New Testament identifies Christ as the Cornerstone five times (see Matthew 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19; Acts 4:5–12; 1 Peter 2:1–10). This is a forgotten title of Christ, but a very important one. The stone comes from Israel, for it was from this chosen people that salvation would come for all. Yet the stone is disallowed and rejected by the religious authorities. This does not prevent the stone giving shape, however, to a new edifice, hewn out of Israel, but for all nations.

RUN TIME: 4:24

LINK: <https://youtu.be/cYeew93oQnY>



THE PERSON OF CHRIST TIP SHEET

5. Temple: Jesus Christ, the Church, Your Body

Temples have long been a focal point for human contact with the divine. Fr. Alexis Torrance shares the many appearances of temples in the Bible before exploring the way that Christ “became our temple to make us His temple” and what that means for us.

RUN TIME: 4:18

LINK: <https://youtu.be/WqsvBB-kyeU>

6. Priest: Jesus Christ, Clergy, Every Believer

In this episode, we learn more about the role of the “Priest”. We compare and contrast the priesthood of Christ with the Old Testament priesthood. The awe-inspiring priesthood of Christ is given to His followers in two ways: first in the “royal priesthood” of every believer, and second in the ordained priesthood of the Church as a specific ministry.

RUN TIME: 4:23

LINK: <https://youtu.be/uSEPghcL5OY>

7. Whose Son? Son of Man or Son of God?

Jesus is repeatedly identified as the Son of Man in the New Testament, yet he is also identified as the Son of God. In this video we learn the essential meaning of calling Jesus Christ both the Son of Man and the Son of God; that he is both fully human and fully God.

RUN TIME: 5:02

LINK: <https://youtu.be/N5-NMlyIYQ8>

8. Peace: Not as the World Gives

We often think of making peace through compromise, or just in terms of fleeing conflict and bowing to outside pressures. But some pressures, above all the pressure to sin, must be completely resisted. In this episode we explore the nature of Christ’s peace.

RUN TIME: 4:16

LINK: <https://youtu.be/xr8MIZzUkpQ>

9. Truth: Who is it? What is it?

We often connect the idea of truth to knowing as many facts about things as possible. But facts about the created world are not absolute truth. They point us towards their source (God), but they are not themselves God, and so they are not absolute truth. To come into contact with Christ is to come into contact with absolute truth.

RUN TIME: 4:00

LINK: <https://youtu.be/HRQExBxuErU>



THE PERSON OF CHRIST TIP SHEET

10. Light

Each of us is summoned by Christ the Light to be enlightened with His own divine life. This episode explores the way in which we experience this light. We focus on the light that shone from Christ at the Transfiguration and its meaning.

RUN TIME: 5:14

LINK: <https://youtu.be/mrMAT4NWzYo>

11. I AM that I AM: the Existing One

The Divine Name revealed to Moses on Mt Sinai is applied by Christ to himself. God simply is, without beginning or end. But God is also personal, not an impersonal idea or abstraction. Christianity proclaims belief in the Holy Trinity as the God of all: One God in Three Persons. God is thus inescapably the personal God.

RUN TIME: 4:52

LINK: <https://youtu.be/pob4Mew5Uwc>

12. Love: God Himself

To cheapen love is to mock Christ, since he is Love itself. In this final episode, we seek to understand the proper perspective on the meaning of love. When we reduce love to a fuzzy sentimental feeling and think that cultivating those feelings is the same as truly loving, then we dishonor the God of love.

RUN TIME: 5:05

LINK: <https://youtu.be/aFXmCPiY0As>



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 1

Introduction; Who do you say that I am?

“Who do you say that I am?”

1. Jesus Christ poses this question to his disciples. He challenges his followers to examine who he is ever more deeply.
 - The person of Christ is the very basis of our faith. We can never tire of learning more about him. He is the cause of our wonder.
 - As Christians we often hear his names and titles. Some are more familiar to us, others less so: Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Temple, Light, Shepherd, King, and so on. In this course we will look in more detail at some of these titles.

A Mosaic of the King

1. We are attempting to piece together a better image for ourselves of who Jesus really is. Each of his titles is like a piece of a mosaic that combine to form his pristine image in our minds and hearts.
 - [St Irenaeus of Lyons](#) (c. AD 130–202) talks about the important of having the image of the King before our eyes, an image kept and passed on by the Church.
 - He also warns against those who tear out the pieces of the mosaic and use those pieces to create a different image, not of Christ, but of their own making. Instead of the King, they create the image of a fox or a dog, and pretend that this is the King (see [Against Heresies 1.8](#)).
 - We have to look reverently, in other words, at each of these titles through the lens of Scripture and the teaching of the Church, so as not to invent our own version of the person of Christ that does not correspond to who he truly is. That is the purpose of this course.

Reflection & Discussion

1. What does Jesus Christ mean to you? Is there a particular title given to him (like Light, Peace, Truth, etc.) that you find especially appealing? Why?
2. Is there a risk of creating a false image of Jesus? Does this happen in contemporary society?
3. Jesus tells the disciples that the world will not necessarily accept him, and that they should expect persecution for following him. How can a Christian find strength to endure being ridiculed just for being his disciple?

Further reading

1. [Matthew 16:13–28](#)
2. [Fr Thomas Hopko, *The Names of Jesus: Discovering the Person of Jesus Christ through Scripture* \(Ancient Faith Publishing, 2015\).](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 2

The Power of the Name: Jesus

The Power of the Name

1. The Bible begins and ends with the idea of naming.

- [Genesis 2](#) describes humanity being entrusted with the task to name the animals.
- [Revelation 2](#) speaks of a new name given to those who believe in Christ.
- Names are powerful because they indicate a relationship. When we take a name in vain, especially the Lord's name, we are rupturing a relationship.

The Name Jesus

1. Jesus is the “name that is above every name” ([Philippians 2:10](#)).

- Jesus is the same name as Joshua, and it means “God saves.” The Old Testament figure of Joshua represents the person who brings the work of Moses to completion, since Moses dies outside the promised land.
- Jesus fulfills this role by bringing us out of the slavery to sin, corruption, and death, into the promised land of sanctity, incorruption, and immortality.
- As Orthodox we are encouraged to always remember the name of Jesus, especially through frequent repetition of the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me.”

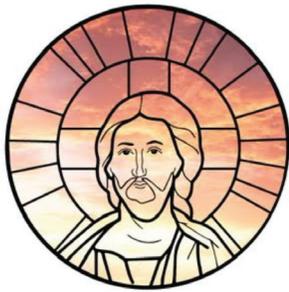
Reflection & Discussion

1. What is the significance of your own name? Who is your patron saint? How are you connected to him or her?
2. Why is God so strict about taking his name in vain? Why would it matter so much?
3. Is it possible to take the name of other people in vain? Or our own name? What might that look like?

Further reading

1. [Genesis 2; Acts 4–5](#)

2. [Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, *The Jesus Prayer* \(CTS, 2017\)](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 3 *Jesus THE Christ*

“Thou art indeed the Christ”

1. The coming of Jesus fulfils the hopes for a saving Messiah, anointed by God.
 - Priests, Kings, and Prophets, were all set apart by anointing in the Old Testament. Christ as the true Anointed One fulfils all these roles.
 - The Messiahship of Christ is accomplished not with worldly power, but through the path to Golgotha, where the Cross becomes his Throne.
 - Holy Week, beginning on Palm Sunday, powerfully sets before us the nature and meaning of Jesus as the Christ, from the procession of Palm Sunday, right through to the Crucifixion, burial, and subsequent glorious resurrection.
 - At the center of Holy Week, on Great and Holy Wednesday, the anointing of Christ by the woman with the alabaster box is commemorated and reminds us what this is all about.

Christ and Chrism

1. What definitively separates Jesus as the Christ from any other “anointed one” (like King David) is the fact that he is both the one who is anointed, and the one who anoints.
 - [St Gregory the Theologian](#) (AD 329–391) meditates on this theme in his [Fourth Theological Oration](#) 21, explaining that Jesus is the Anointed One not because someone from outside anoints him, but because his identity as the Son of God means that divinity anoints humanity within his very person.
 - [St Nicholas Cabasilas](#) (c. 1322–1391) talks a lot about this too, saying that Jesus is not only Christ (“Anointed One”) but also Chrism (the ointment itself). He is thus the source of divine anointing for everyone.

Reflection & Discussion

1. How should we think about our own chrismation in the Church, our own anointing: doesn't it make us also “anointed ones” or little christs?
2. If we too become anointed ones when we are joined to Christ, how should that be reflected in our lives?

Further reading

1. [Matthew 26:7–13](#)
2. [St Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ* \(SVS Press, 1997\).](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 4

The Stone the Builders Rejected: The Cornerstone

“The rejected stone...”

1. On the basis of [Psalm 118:22](#), the New Testament identifies Christ as the Cornerstone five times (see [Matthew 21:33–46](#); [Mark 12:1–12](#); [Luke 20:9–19](#); [Acts 4:5–12](#); [1 Peter 2:1–10](#)).
 - This is a forgotten title of Christ, but a very important one. The stone comes from Israel, for it was from this chosen people that salvation would come for all.
 - Yet the stone is disallowed and rejected by the religious authorities.
 - This does not prevent the stone giving shape, however, to a new edifice, hewn out of Israel, but for all nations.

“...Is become the cornerstone”

1. Christ is the Cornerstone of the Church and the life of every Christian, but also the Cornerstone of all things, of history and eternity.
 - We can see this at play in the way we count the years to and from Christ’s birth. And also how we structure the seven day week, giving pride of place to Sunday, the day of resurrection, which is the cornerstone of new life.
 - If Christ is cornerstone, then his disciples are stones in the building he erects. St Peter (petros = stone/rock) as the chief apostle, is also a chief stone in that building. But he is one of an innumerable host. An influential early Christian text, the [Shepherd of Hermas](#), discusses the idea of every Christian being a stone in the Church’s structure.

Reflection & Discussion

1. If Christ is the Cornerstone of all things, how does he give shape to our own individual lives? Could we do more to recognize the importance of this title?
2. What traces of thinking about Christ as Cornerstone can we find in contemporary Western culture, which we may not even realize (e.g. our calendar system)? How important has the figure of Jesus been to the development of culture?

Further reading

1. [1 Peter 2](#)
2. [Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Illustrated Jesus through the Centuries* \(Yale University Press, 1997\).](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 5

Temple: Jesus Christ, the Church, Your Body

“The temple of his body”

1. Temples have long been a focal point for human contact with the divine.

- The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (ca. 1000 BC), rebuilt and expanded as the Second Temple following its destruction in ca. 586 BC, was important in the life and ministry of Jesus.
- But Jesus ultimately condemns the corruption that had overtaken the life of the Jerusalem temple ([Matthew 21:12–17](#)). Instead of being a focal point for God, it had become a focal point for greed and personal gain.
- He predicts its total destruction, which occurs in AD 70. In doing so, he points to his body as the true temple. This is because his body is the body of God Incarnate. No temple built with hands could contain God, but now we have access to a temple that is truly divine and life-giving.

“your body is a temple”

1. St Paul elaborates on the idea that the Body of Christ is the true temple, and he identifies this Body with the Church ([1 Corinthians 12](#)). As members of the Church, we are members of his Body, and thus we too are temples ([1 Corinthians 6:15–20](#)).

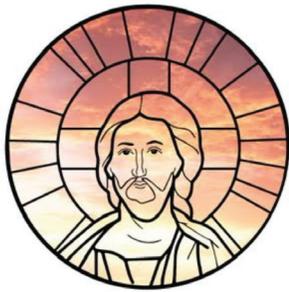
- The highest among these temples of God is the Theotokos, the Mother of God. She bore God in the flesh, giving her the title “temple” in a special and unrepeatable sense.
- But thanks to her role as temple, we too can now becoming dwelling places of God, true tabernacles of the Holy Spirit, by our union with Christ, in both soul and body.
- St Caesarius of Arles (ca. AD 468–542) compares our body and our soul to the outer and inner altars of the ancient Temple: by living a life of purity and virtue in body and soul, we are manifested as temples of God.

Reflection & Discussion

1. If Jesus Christ is the Temple, why do we still build physical temples or churches? And why go to church if our own body is a temple of God?
2. Jesus cleansed the ancient Temple because of corruption. How does he deal with greed and other human failings in the institution of the Church now?

Further reading

1. [1 Kings 8; John 2:13–22](#)
2. [St Gregory Palamas, Sermon on the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 6

Priest: Jesus Christ, Clergy, Every Believer

“We have a Great High Priest”

1. Jesus is described as our Priest throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. His priesthood is compared and contrasted with the Old Testament priesthood.
 - The Old Testament priest was a minister of the temple who mediated and offered sacrifice for the people of Israel. Christ fulfills this role not for Israel alone, but for the whole world
 - Moreover, unlike the priests of Israel, his priesthood is not linked to being a direct descendant of Aaron (the first High Priest), and the sacrifice he offers is not grain or animals, but the sacrifice of himself, the true Lamb of God, upon the Cross.
 - He is a priest “[after the order of Melchizedek](#),” that is, his priesthood transcends that of Aaron, and is not

“You are a royal priesthood”

1. This awe-inspiring priesthood of Christ is given to his followers in two ways: first in the “royal priesthood” of every believer, and second in the ordained priesthood of the Church as a specific ministry.
 - We all share in Christ’s priesthood when we offer the sacrifice of praise and of a broken and contrite heart before God. This joins us to his priestly work of reconciliation, and makes us priestly too.
 - The second form of priesthood (made of deacons, priests, and bishops), constitutes a special manifestation of Christ’s single priesthood in the life of the Church. It is an indescribable gift that allows for the building up of the Church above all through the life-giving sacraments (baptism, Eucharist, confession, etc.). It connects the Church of today right back to the Church of the Apostles, to Christ himself. And thus every believer is connected directly to Christ through this priestly ministry.

Reflection & Discussion

1. Even if I am not an ordained priest, how can I be more priestly in my daily life?
2. Why do the litanies in Orthodox services so often have prayers for our bishops as well as the clergy in general? What is the significance of this?

Further reading

1. [Hebrews 6:19–10:39](#)

2. [St John Chrysostom, Six Books on the Priesthood \(SVS Press, 1996\)](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 7

Whose Son? Son of Man or Son of God?

Son of God, Son of Man

1. Jesus is repeatedly identified as the [Son of Man](#) in the New Testament, yet he is also identified as the [Son of God](#).

- The essential meaning of calling Jesus Christ both the Son of Man and the Son of God is that he is both fully human and fully God.
- He is not, however, two persons or two Sons: he is one person, the person of the Son and Word of God, who takes flesh from the Virgin.
- He clothes himself in our human nature in order to heal our humanity, and more than that, to deify it with the divine life he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He becomes the Son of Man to make us children of God

1. As we state in [the Creed](#), Christ's coming is "for us and for our salvation."

- The whole point of the Incarnation is our salvation. Moreover, in taking our humanity to himself, he does not abolish or dissolve it into his divinity. He remains one person "in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" ([Chalcedonian Definition](#), AD 451) The union of divinity and humanity in his person is real and complete, but it is a union that retains the natural integrity of humanity and divinity.
- This has powerful implications for what it means to be saved. To be saved is to be joined to God through the humanity of the Son of God. In that union we truly receive eternal life by grace, the beginningless life of God, but at the same time we remain forever human. If we are saved, we will never be divided or separated from God, yet we likewise will never be confused, dissolved, or changed into something else. This follows the pattern of Christ's own identity, since as he declares, "where I am, there shall also my servant be" ([John 12:26](#)).

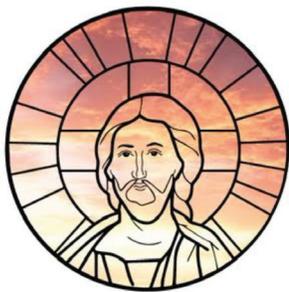
Reflection & Discussion

1. Can we do more to connect the dogmas of our faith with our spiritual life? How does declaring Christ to be both the Son of God and the Son of Man, "one person in two natures," help us to do that?
2. If we are really called to become children of God, even in some sense "gods," how should that impact our approach to life and salvation?

Further reading

1. [Hebrews 1-2](#)

2. [St Athanasius the Great, On the Incarnation \(SVS Press, 2012\)](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 8

Peace: Not as the World Gives

Peace be with you all

1. Jesus repeatedly summons us to peace, and offers us his peace.

- Those who make peace are made sharers in his own title: “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” ([Matthew 5:9](#)).
- As the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ is the supreme peacemaker. The way he makes peace and brings reconciliation is through the blood of his Cross (see [Colossians 1:19–23](#)).
- The paradigm for peace is paradoxically found in the sign of the Cross.

My peace I give you, yet not as the world gives

1. The nature of Christ’s peace is deeper than we think.

- We often think of making peace through compromise, or just in terms of fleeing conflict and bowing to outside pressures. But some pressures, above all the pressure to sin, must be completely resisted. This is why Christ can say that in one sense he “came not to bring peace upon the earth, but rather a sword” ([Matthew 10:34](#)).
- The “sword” here refers to resisting anything that threatens our relationship to Christ, since “he is our peace” ([Ephesians 2:14](#)).
- The opposite of peace is not only war but also and primarily *confusion*. Anything that brings us confusion of mind and spirit is not a harbinger of Christ’s peace (see [1 Corinthians 14:33](#)).

Reflection & Discussion

1. Why do you think the priest or bishop so often says “Peace be with you all” in Orthodox services? How should we react to this gift of peace?
2. Does thinking about confusion being the opposite of peace help us make more sense of what Christian peace looks like? Is it possible to have an absence of outward conflict, but still not have true peace?

Further reading

1. [1 Thessalonians 5](#)

2. [St Seraphim of Sarov, A Wonderful Revelation to the World](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 9

Truth: Who is it? What is it?

Truth reveals and lies conceal

1. To come into contact with Christ is to come into contact with absolute truth.

- We often connect the idea of truth to knowing as many facts about things as possible. But facts about the created world are not absolute truth. They point us towards their source (God), but they are not themselves God, and so they are not absolute truth.
- Truth is not so much “known” in an abstract manner as “lived in.” To abide in truth is to be in communion with God. Jesus Christ is truth because he gives us access to that communion in himself.
- Likewise Jesus Christ is the Logos of God, which means both the Word of God and Divine Reason or Meaning ([John 1:1-18](#)). As Truth and Logos, every created thing holds together in him ([Colossians 1:16-19](#)). He is their source and their destiny.

Not “What is truth?” but “Who is truth?”

1. Truth in Christianity always points us to a “who” rather than a “what.”

- Every truth we discover in the world, whether through science or literature or our lived experience, is given to lead us up to the personal God.
- Unfortunately, we are able to misuse these truths. We can even misuse the words of Holy Scripture in this way. Whenever we use truths or facts to justify our sins, or to alienate ourselves or our neighbor from Christ, we are abusing truth, and ultimately falling into a lie.
- Even the devil knows that God exists, and trembles ([James 2:19](#)). But knowing this fact does not make the devil “true.” He is in fact the archetypal liar—the father of lies—because although he knows true things, he does not abide in truth, and so there is actually no truth in him ([John 8:44](#)). Knowing facts, even about God, is not the same as possessing truth.

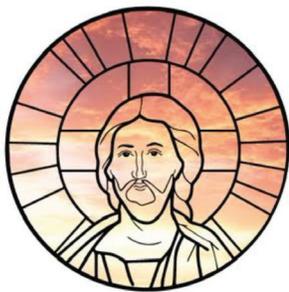
Reflection & Discussion

1. If Jesus Christ is Truth, why doesn't he speak very much about science or engineering? What does this tell us about the nature of truth?
2. How should we relate the truths we learn in our studies or through daily experience with Jesus Christ as absolute truth?

Further reading

1. [John 14](#)

2. [St Justin Popovich, *Man and the God-Man* \(Sebastian Press, 2008\), chapter 3](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 10 *Light*

“I am the light of the world”

1. Every darkness of evil is dissipated by the light of Christ: such darkness cannot comprehend him, and it cannot overcome him ([John 1:4–5](#))
 - Each of us is summoned by Christ the Light to be enlightened with his own divine life.
 - Though this call is common to every human being, his life is not forced upon us.
 - We first fully enter his light through the illumination of holy baptism. In baptism the call becomes a reality.
 - To remain in his saving light is to live in accordance with his light-filled commandments (see [Proverbs 6:23](#), [Psalm 119:105–106, 130](#)). The inaugural commandment of Christ’s earthly ministry is repentance ([Matthew 4:17](#)), which always throws open the doors to God’s light.

What light is this?

1. The light that shone from Christ at the Transfiguration was the uncreated light of the Godhead, the light of the kingdom to come. This is the light we seek.
 - In the fourteenth century a theological debate broke out over the nature of the light beheld by the disciples on Mount Thabor. The Church clarified that this was not just a very bright physical light that came in and out of existence, or an intellectual “light of the mind.” It was rather the uncreated light of divinity—shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that was revealed and disclosed at the Transfiguration. This deifying light is none other than God’s own life, offered to the world through the humanity of Christ. The disciples were receiving a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven.
 - While our experience of God’s light may not be as strong as that of the apostles and saints, we nonetheless have access to it here and now in the life of the Church. We must not diminish our understanding of the glory that God wishes to bestow on us, just because we do not measure up to it. Otherwise we will end up twisting the Gospel and reducing its meaning to the fulfillment of our own personal desires. We must instead walk by faith and humility, knowing that God indeed wishes to make us “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (see [Colossians 1:9–12](#)).

Reflection & Discussion

1. Why do we call baptism an “illumination”? How does it differ from the “enlightenment” that accompanies everyone born into the world?
2. Is it possible to cling to darkness even after we have seen the light? How can we find ways to prefer light rather than darkness? (see [John 3:19](#))

Further reading

1. [Mark 9:1–10](#)
2. [Light on the Mountain](#) (SVS Press, 2013)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 11 *I AM that I AM: the Existing One*

God as Personal Being

1. The Divine Name revealed to Moses on Mt Sinai is applied by Christ to himself.
 - When Christ makes this identification ([John 8:58](#)), he is declaring that he is the God of Israel.
 - God simply is, without beginning or end. But God is also personal, not an impersonal idea or abstraction. The coming of Christ, which is the manifestation of the Son of God, reveals the Father as always the Father of the Son. Just as the Father is God, so is the Son “true God from true God” ([Creed](#)).
 - The sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son likewise reveals the person of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, as distinct from the Father and the Son, yet “worshipped and glorified” with them. Christianity proclaims belief in the Holy Trinity as the God of all: One God in Three Persons. God is thus inescapably the *personal* God.

The human person

1. The human being is made in the image of the personal God.
 - As persons we find the meaning of our existence in loving communion with God and our neighbor. This is why the “two great commandments” of Christ are to love God with our whole being, and to love our neighbors as though they were our own self (see [Mark 12:29–31](#)). These commandments reveal what true personhood looks like, what it truly means to be, to have authentic *being*.
 - Some religious traditions and philosophies think that we need to somehow escape our personal identity to be united to God or with true being. But this is not the Christian understanding. Our personhood is precious and treasured by God. He will never destroy it. However, we must not confuse sinful or passionate habits and attachments with the idea of our “personal identity.” Nothing that is sinful belongs to our identity. This is why we also must die a death to all such things in order to find our “life hid with Christ in God” ([Colossians 3:3](#)).

Reflection & Discussion

1. How does the Divine Name (“I am that I am” or “I am the one who is”) resonate with you? What does it mean to you?
2. What is the difference between God being personal and us being persons? How do we deal with the temptation to claim that whatever we feel or think in a given moment is a permanent part of our “personal identity”?

Further reading

1. [Exodus 3:1–15; John 8:12–59](#)
2. [Saint Sophrony the Athonite, *His Life is Mine* \(SVS Press, 1997\)](#)



THE PERSON OF CHRIST

WORKSHEET - EPISODE 12 *Love: God Himself*

God is Love, Christ is Love

1. To cheapen love is to mock Christ, since he is Love itself.

- The all-conquering love of Christ, which leads him to the Cross and Hades for our sakes, is awe-inspiringly great and unfathomable.
- When we reduce love to a fuzzy sentimental feeling, and think that cultivating those feelings is the same as truly loving, then we dishonor the God of love.
- Holding the measure of divine love before our gaze, which is the measure of the Cross, we can walk through life with a proper perspective on the meaning of love.
- Even if we don't measure up to that love, we must keep it as our goal, we must hold onto it as our destiny in Christ.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

1. We can only love in freedom: nothing can separate us from divine love except our own will.

- God does not treat us like robots. If he forced his love on us, and coerced us into his kingdom, we would not really be living in love.
- Thus we are free to accept his call to love, and we are free to reject it.
- This is why we pray "Thy will be done" over and over again. It is an expression of how we want to join our will, our freedom, to the divine will, and divine freedom. Christ accomplishes this union of divine and human will in his own person, demonstrating it in the Garden of Gethsemane ([Matthew 26:38-39](#)). This union occurs in us too by his grace when we offer our will to him. It is then that we find true freedom, since it is then that we abide in divine love.
- "Perfect love casts out fear" ([1 John 4:18](#)). St Maximus the Confessor tells us that the fear of punishment is cast out when we attain perfect love, but that even with perfect love we still need a reverential fear of growing indifferent to God (*Centuries on Love* 1.81-82).

Reflection & Discussion

1. How can we discern divine love from other kinds of love? Is it possible to reject God's love and substitute it for another kind?
2. What are some of the ways we can access divine love in our daily life? How can we retain that love?

Further reading

1. [1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 2-5](#)

2. [Wounded by Love: The Life and Wisdom of Saint Porphyrios \(Denise Harvey, 2005\)](#)