

I Believe in Jesus Christ (Part 1)

The heart of our Catholic faith is our belief in Jesus Christ. Beyond believing in God the Father, we believe in:

“Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.”

People wonder:

Is Jesus a real person or a mythological concoction like Paul Bunyan?

Is he the Messiah that the Jewish people were waiting for?

Is he really divine in nature?

Is he really a human being or some kind of “super hero?”

Did he just fall from the sky like a Greek mythological god?

Did he really die or did he just move on to a higher form of life?

Of what practical value is he to us?

We profess that Jesus was a real person born in an historical time. In fact it was the time when Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, was in charge of Judea. He had a real mother, named Mary, who happened to be a virgin when he was conceived.

And yes we believe that he was the Messiah promised to Israel. Remember when Peter told Jesus: *“You are the Christ, the son of the living God?”* (Matthew 16:16-17). “Christ” meant the “chrism-ed one” or the “anointed one” and referred to Jesus as the long-promised Messiah.

Jesus was God’s own son, not just a “son of God” in the generic sense of the term. Twice God spoke to men on earth and said, *“This is my son in whom I am well pleased”* (see Matthew 3:17). And in the Nicene Creed it is made clear that he is *“God from*

God...begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father.” Jesus is divine. We Catholics call him the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

Like any other human being Jesus was conceived in a woman’s womb and was born the way all babies are. Unlike other humans, however, Jesus was conceived by a miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit into Mary’s womb. He wasn’t some kind of Greek god who was beamed in from the heavens.

Since we believe that Jesus was “one in being with the Father,” we might be inclined to think he did not die, but was “vacuumed” somehow up to heaven. In our creed we profess that he died—a real physical death. His death was a horrible one—he suffered horrendously and was crucified like a common criminal. He did not have some kind of storybook death. And the gospels make it clear that he was buried in a tomb and even tell us the name of the man who owned the tomb—Joseph of Arimathea.

Finally we believe that Jesus is “*our Lord.*” He is real and personal to us right now, rather than being some kind of remote founder of an ancient religion. “Lord” is translated from the Greek “Kyrios” which translates the sacred name of God in the Old Testament. He is not just “the Lord” but “our Lord.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#448) states: “*Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as ‘Lord.’ This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing.*”

This is where we come in. For us he is not a far-off god, but one who touches us, helps us, heals us, forgives us, and saves us from the bonds of death. He is an approachable Lord who suffered just like we do and who not only understands what we go through, but lifts us from the mire of human difficulties. He is a living Lord whom we talk to every day, surrender our lives to, and try to follow as devoted disciples.

In a Word, Jesus, is the center of our faith. We proclaim that “*there is no other name under heaven by which a man can be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

(In Part 2 of this article we will address the question: ‘How can Jesus do all these things for us if he is dead?’)