On-Going Formation

The Person of Christ

Francis and Community

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2024 On-Going Formation Theme

- Living in Friendship with Jesus and Francis: Manifesting Our Savior and Our Seraphic Father in Our Daily Lives


"Forgiveness is redemptive suffering."

The Person of Christ

The Mystery of Jesus Christ (pages 90-134)

Nestorianism and the Council of Ephesus

- Nestorius → Patriarch of Constantinople in 428.

- Nestorius recommended that Mary's famous and much used title of **Mother of God** (*Theotokos*) should be dropped and replaced by **Mother of Chirst** (*Chirstotokos*).

- Nestorius seems to have though that every nature (*physis*) necessarily constitutes a subject (*hypostasis*) and a person (*prosopon*).

- This logically led to **denying Mary the title of "Mother of God."**

- St. Cyril called a Synod at Alexandria and sent Nestorius a letter containing twelve anathemas in 430.

- The controversy between the two patriarchs caused a lot of confusion in the Church, and the emperor Theodosius II called the **Council of Ephesus in 431** at which St. Cyril presided.
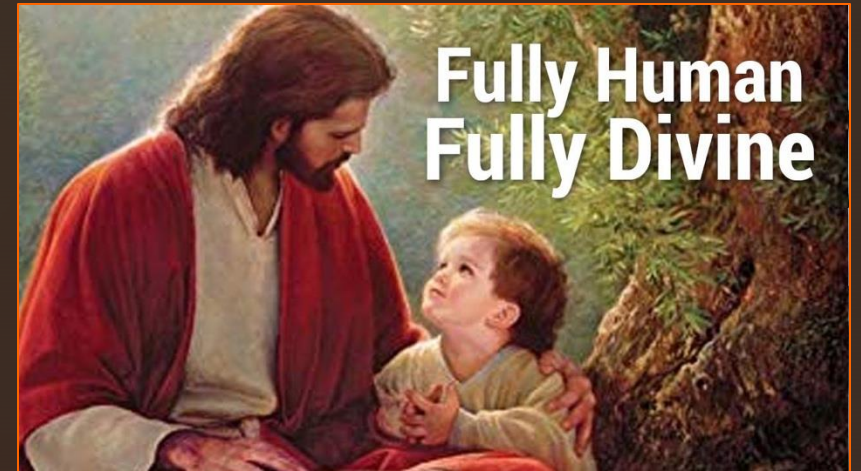

NESTORIUS

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

June 27th
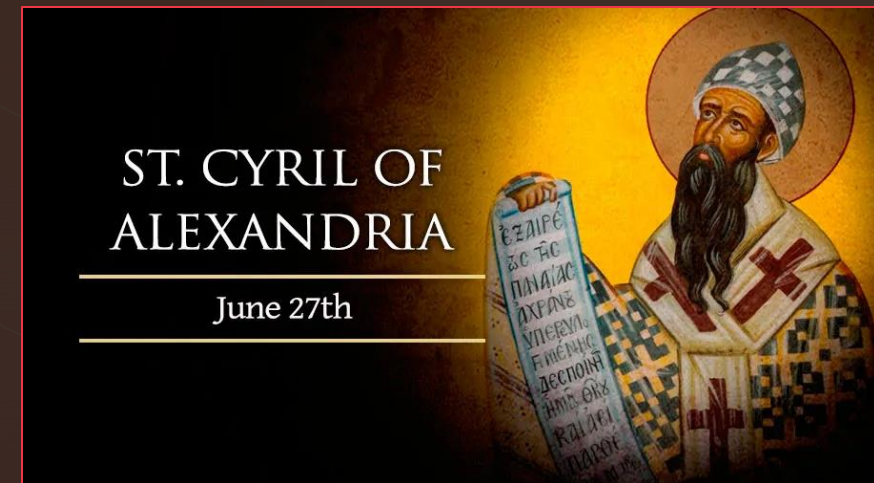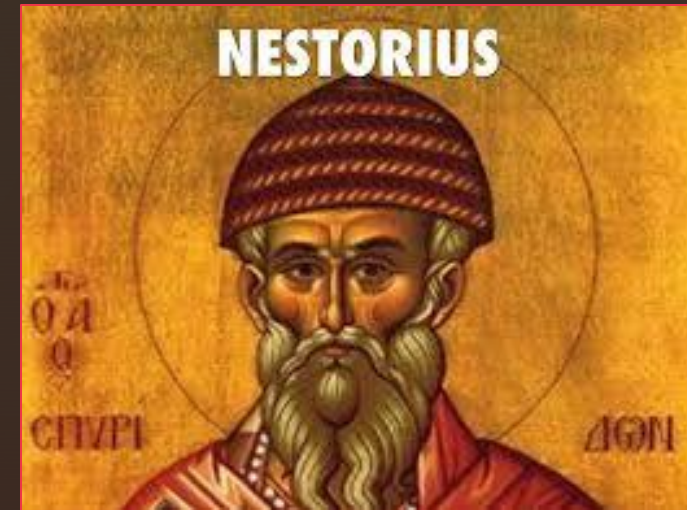
The Unicity of Christ's Person

- **Chris is one subject only (*hypostasis*) and one person only (*prosopon*).**

- He who is God is also man, through a **union of a divine *physis* (nature) & human nature**.

- Therefore, **Mary is truly the Mother of God** because she gave birth according to the flesh to the Word of God made flesh.

- Christ is the Son of God, and it is wrong to say that Jesus the man is a divinized man and an adoptive son of God.

- Christ's flesh is life-giving (an implicit **reference to the Eucharist**), because it is the flesh of the Word.

- **Christ should be worshipped with one adoration**, and not worshipped as God and separately worshipped as man—one Person.
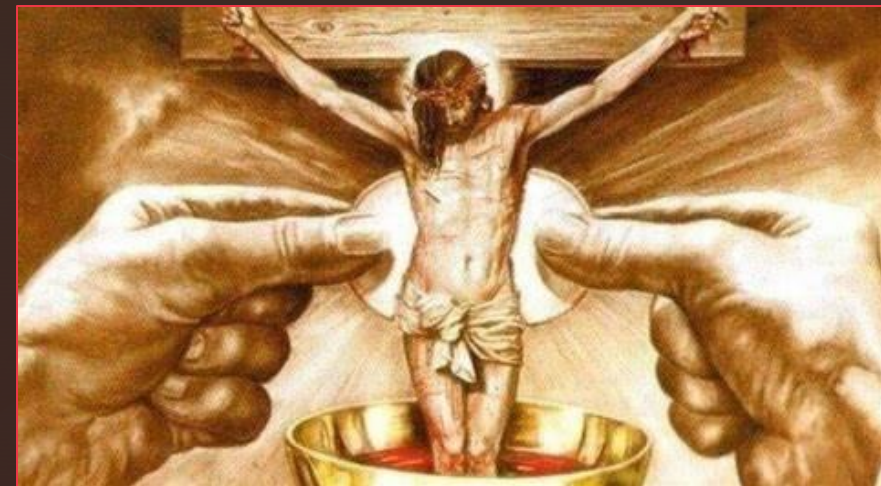
Jesus Christ, Perfect God and Perfect Man

- (John 1:4) **"The Word became Flesh."**
- This is not because the Godhead changed into humanity (because that would be impossible), but because **that flesh is the flesh of the Word**.
- Therefore, divinity and humanity belong to the **one subject or person**—The Word Incarnate.
- Christ says to Nicodemus: "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven" (Jn 3:13); therefore, he who ascends is the same one as descends and who is in heaven; **he who ascends as man is the same one as has descended as God**.
- Before the Council of Ephesus, we find very clear use of terminology. For example, Tertullian (+223) used a formula similar to that later used by the Council of Chalcedon: "(in Christ) **we see two states (=natures) with no confusion, but rather, united in one person, God and man, Jesus**."
- St. Augustine (+430) said, "**the same one who is God, is man; and the same who is man, is God; not through the confusion of the natures but through the unity of the person**."

Fully Human
Fully Divine

There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man *Jesus Christ.*

1Timothy 2:5

Union & Distinction of Christ's Humanity & Divinity

- The expression ***hypostatic union*** is used to show that the union of the human nature and divine nature in Christ is a union in the ***hypostasis*** in the Person.
- That is, the union is not in the nature (the two natures are not mixed together); **there is a union of natures, because both belong to the same Person**.
- **Tome of St. Leo** (449) reaffirms the true doctrine concerning the hypostatic union.
- In Christ there is only one Person and two natures, which are united while remaining distinct and not confused: **"with the character of both natures unimpaired, therefore, coming together in one person, humility was assumed by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity, and in order to wipe out our guilt the inviolable nature was joined to the nature subject to suffering so that, as our salvation demanded, one and the same 'mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim 2:5) could from one element be able to die and from the other not. The true God therefore was born in the complete and perfect nature of man, complete in his (nature) and complete in ours."**
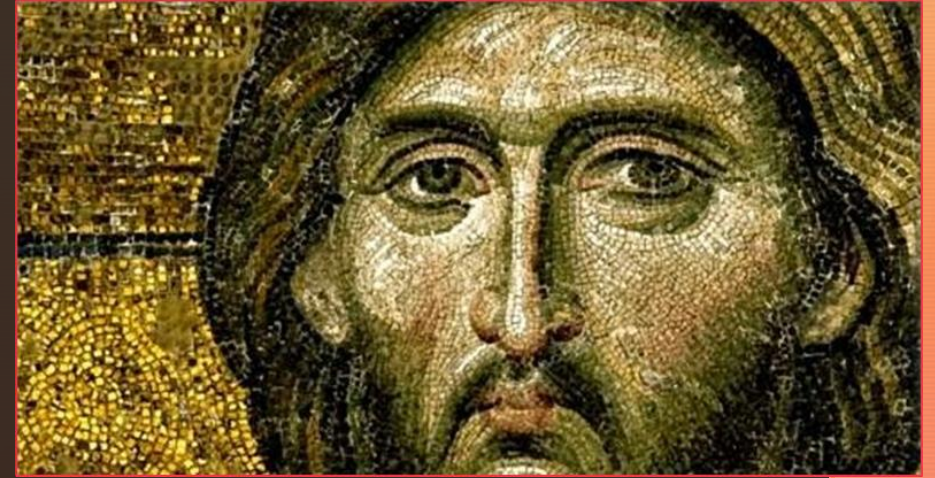
The Human Actions of God in Christ

- Since all Jesus' actions are actions of the divine Person, all his human actions can and should be called actions of God.

    - These are actions which can properly be called "theandric" (divine-human).

    - For example, when Jesus spoke (a human action) it was God speaking because Jesus is God. His speech was divine and human (divine, because it was a divine Person speaking; human, because He spoke through His human nature).

- All this human behavior is the behavior of God. "'For in him dwells *all* the fullness of the godhead bodily' (Col 2:9). Christ is God become man—a complete, perfect man. Through His human nature, He shows us what divine nature is […]. **Everything Christ did has a transcendental value. It shows us the nature of God**."

# The Inception of the Incarnation and its Permanence

- Faith in the Incarnation includes the belief that they hypostatic union happened the very moment the humanity of Jesus Christ was conceived, and that **this union never ceased and never will cease**.

- The conception of the humanity (creation of the soul in the body formed in the womb of the Blessed Virgin) and the assumption of this humanity by the Word were simultaneous…the Son of God was conceived as a man of Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit.

- The fact that the Incarnation will last forever helps us see that Jesus is not just a "device" for the salvation of mankind: **He *is* salvation**.

"In all this there is an ineffable mystery…because the act of the Incarnation, since it is an action *ad extra*, has its terminus *ad intra* (= "inside" the Trinity), since Jesus' humanity is assumed ("introduced") into the Trinity as the humanity of the Son, and not of the Father or the Holy Spirit: the Father sends the Son to mankind, and the Holy Spirit is the perfect Annointing of the humanity of the Son."

The Immutability of God, and Incarnation

- Our faith teaches us that God is immutable: "we firmly believe and simply confess that there is one true God, eternal, immense, unchangeable."

- Using classical language, we can say that in the Incarnation the only newness occurs in the assumed human nature, which at the Incarnation begins to exist and to be humanity, the divinity experiences no change.

- Divine immutability means that it is impossible for there to be any kind of change in God. This is a mystery.

- What is the true meaning of *kenosis*, of the Son of God's self-emptying in the Incarnation? (Two dimensions)

  - God assumed a non-divine nature, manifesting Himself to the world through a human nature, while at the same time both revealing and hiding His divinity.

  - The Son of God renounced, in his human nature, the glory due it as *God's* humanity. He chose to be a Suffering Servant, dying on the cross and obeying the Father's plan.
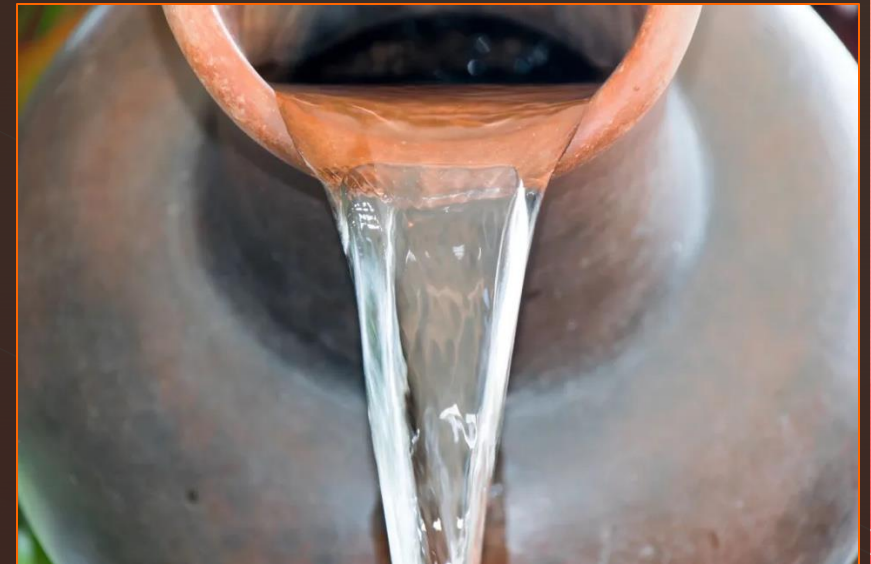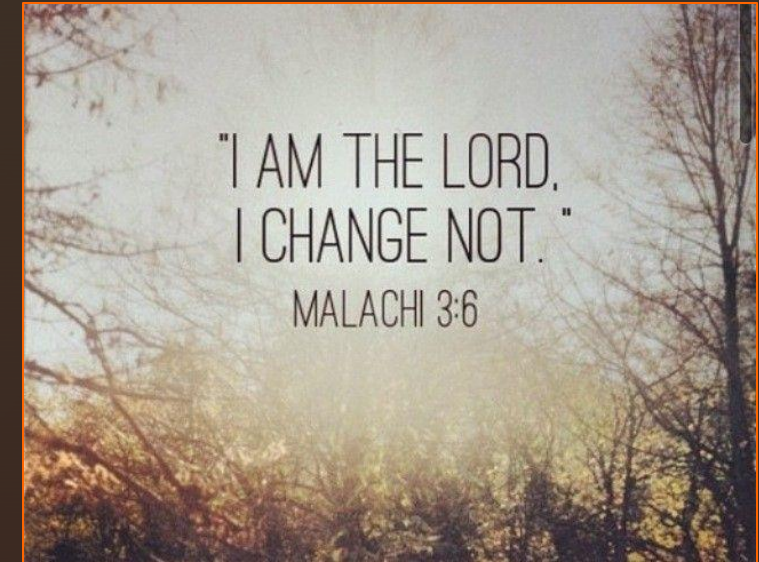
The Appropriateness of the Incarnation

▪ Love is the deepest reason behind every action of God.

▪ ***Bonum est diffusivum sui*** ("Goodness spreads itself")

▪ <u>Every action of God ad extra is simply a communication of his goodness and of his perfection</u>. Three stages:

  ▪ Through creation; Through grace; Through the Incarnation

▪ It is customary, at the beginning of Christology, to highlight the way <u>the mystery of the Incarnation fits in not only with men's needs (the need of a Saviour) but also with the goodness and fatherhood of God</u>; to stress the wonderful insight it gives us into God Himself.

▪ <u>The Incarnation is a manifestation of God's infinite love</u> for man, of his inexhaustible mercy, of his great kindness.
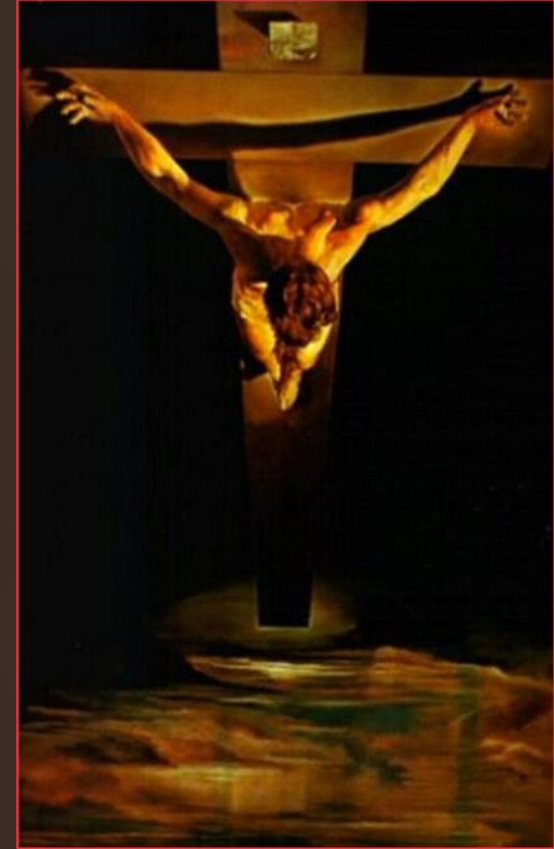
"...since friendship consists of a certain equality, it seems that there cannot be a friendly union between things that are very unequal. Consequently, in order to have a more familiar friendship between God and man, it was appropriate for the latter that God should become man. In this way knowing God visibly we should feel ourselves 'caught up in love of the God we cannot see.'"

Francis and Community

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God (pages 45-63)

Francis and Community

- Luke 6:12-16

- Acts 4:32-35

- No dramatic pathways opened for Francis immediately after his conversion. He simply took what he deemed the next right step, then the next.

- He began repairing rundown churches in the region of Assisi, believing that this was what the Lord wanted of him.

- Little did he realize that before long it would be the Church universal that he would repair in company with hundreds, then thousands, of men and women who wished to walk Francis' way—**THIS IS US**!

"One day when he [Francis] was wondering over the mercy of the Lord with regard to the gifts bestowed upon him, he wished that the course of his life and that of his brothers might be shown him by the Lord; he sought out a place of prayer, as he had done so often, and he persevered there for a long time with fear and trembling before the Lord of the whole earth…"

Francis and Community (Continued)

- The feudal system had seen its best (or worst) days and was quickly fading from the European scene.

- City-states, the forerunners of nation-states began to form.

- Violent rivalries often marked these small kingdoms.

- Indeed, Francis himself began his adult life seeking glory as a warrior for his native Assisi.

- A new middle class of tradespeople and small landowners began to appear.

- The shifting social order brought with it increased marginalization of the poor.

"A 'new grace' was needed as the times changed; the Spirit provided this grace in Franciscan community life."

Francis and Community (Continued)

▪ Upon his conversion, **Francis did not set out to gather people around him**. Initially, his turning to the Lord seemed to him an entirely **individual experience**.

▪ He went about repairing churches in the vicinity, spending the rest of his time in prayer.

▪ However, **God had other designs**.

▪ As he gained followers, Francis realized that he was called to provide a community structure for them.

▪ In the truest sense, **the whole Franciscan charism of brotherhood and sisterhood did not come from the "founder," but from God**.

▪ Francis did not invite people. They were drawn to him by the same Spirit that inspired Francis.

Losing Ourselves, We Find Ourselves

- **The way of relinquishment is the lifelong process** of removing the obstacles to loving and just relationships with our neighbors on this earth and moving toward more genuine community among all God's children, the kind of brotherhood Francis envisioned.

- As we help to remove the obstacles to the liberation of others, <u>we are simultaneously removing obstacles to our own liberation</u>.

- We are called to a wholeness as human beings that is much greater than our identity as individuals.

- <u>Relinquishment and the Abundant Life</u>

  - <u>The call to relinquishment is grounded in the promise of abundant line and in the language of salvation.</u>

  - <u>It is the essential gospel dialectic of losing one's life in order to find it.</u>

  - <u>The work of relinquishment is difficult for individuals to realize in isolation.</u> **This is why we have fraternity**.
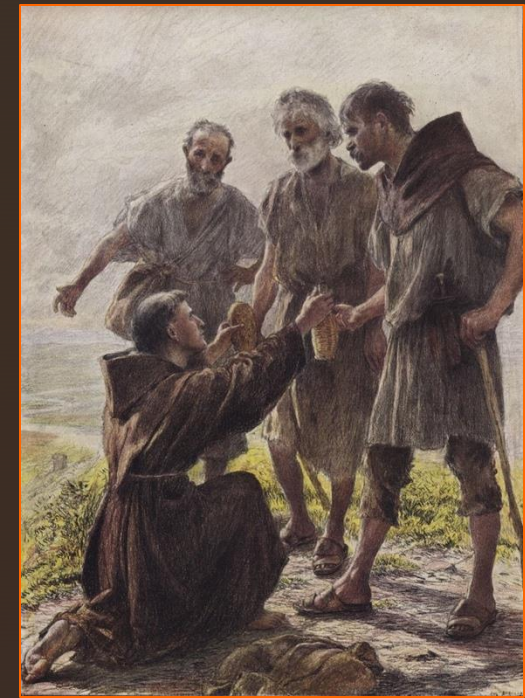
Characteristics of the Franciscan Communities

- As their community life took shape, definite characteristics began to emerge which corresponded to the signs of the times. <u>These would mark the movement forever</u>:

    - The **communities were essentially made up of lay persons, not clerics**.

    - Francis' followers were **women as well as men**.

    - The communities **rejected the ideas of monasteries** and lived among the people.

    - The style of life was collegial, with those in **leadership at the service of the group**.

    - The friars worked for their upkeep, and when that failed, **they begged**.

    - Francis' followers rejected violence of every kind.

    - They **inserted themselves in the world**.

    - Their ministry took them **into the marketplace**.

- The first rule of life that Francis adopted was the Gospel itself, especially Gospel texts that described how Jesus' followers are to go about the world. (**JESUS-CENTERED**)
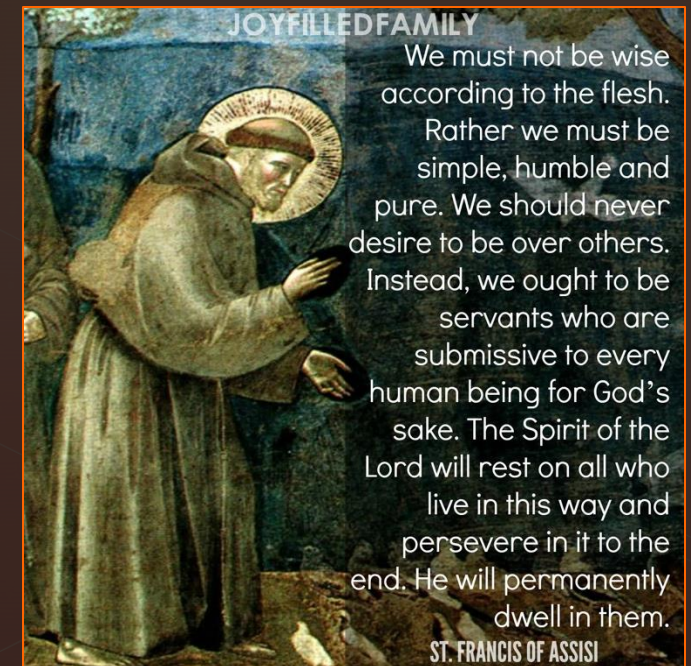
JOYFILLEDFAMILY

We must not be wise according to the flesh. Rather we must be simple, humble and pure. We should never desire to be over others. Instead, we ought to be servants who are submissive to every human being for God's sake. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on all who live in this way and persevere in it to the end. He will permanently dwell in them.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI