

CCC 535-630: The life of Christ and his Passion and Death.
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Go to small groups: Questions:

1. According to Nos. 535-537, there are many things that Jesus' baptism symbolizes or represents. Identify at least three and be prepared to discuss in your small group.
2. One of the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary is the Proclamation of the Kingdom. What is required to enter the Kingdom of God? (See Nos. 543-546.)
3. What is the significance of the Transfiguration for us today?
4. How do we participate in Christ's suffering?

I. Importance of this material...great grace and a gift to speak about Christ!

- A. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 66, "The vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the Kingdom, which he has gained for us by his Paschal Mystery."
- B. *Evangelii Gaudium* 165: "265. Jesus' whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life. Whenever we encounter this anew, we become convinced that it is exactly what others need, even though they may not recognize it: "What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters."
- C. CCC 450: "the key, the center, and the purpose of the whole of man's history" (No. 450)
- D. GS 22: Christ reveals man to himself.
- E. *Redemptor Hominis*, 10: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."
- F. *Deus Caritas Est*, 12: His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: "God is love" (*I Jn* 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.

II. All of Christ's life is a Sacrament –

III. In this light we want to look at a few important events in his life (obviously we cannot do all):
Baptism, Temptation, Preaching of the Kingdom, Transfiguration.

- A. Baptism of Jesus. **Matthew 3:13 - 4:1** ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God

descending like a dove, and alighting on him; ¹⁷ and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

- B. CCC 537 "Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and 'walk in newness of life.'"
- C. **Romans 6:4** ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.
- D. Temptation in the Desert: **Matthew 4:1-11** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; ⁹ and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.
- E. After this Jesus begins his preaching. **Luke 4:14-21** ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; ¹⁷ and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." ²⁰ And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."
- F. Transfiguration. **Matthew 17:1-13** And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵ He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. ⁹ And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead." ¹⁰ And

the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹ He replied, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; ¹² but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. Life is pointed towards the Cross.

- G. CCC 556: On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection. From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body." But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God"

IV. The Paschal Mystery of Jesus.

- A. **John 10:14-18** ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."

B. What is redemption?

1. **1 Peter 1:18-19**: "you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb."
2. **Mark 10:45** ⁴⁵ For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
3. CCC 601: "The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received", St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures." In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles."

C. Jesus and the Temple: Understanding his death.

1. **John 2:19-21** ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he spoke of the temple of his body.
2. **Hebrews 9:11-14** ¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the

eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Christ's whole life is an offering to the Father on our behalf:

D. Understand the cross in light of the Last Supper.

1. **Luke 22:19-20** ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.
2. **John 19:32-35** ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; ³³ but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness -- his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth -- that you also may believe.

E. What is the purpose of Jesus death?

1. CCC 606: "From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." The sacrifice of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world" expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "[for] I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."
2. **1 Corinthians 15:3** ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.
3. CCC 604: "By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (*1 Jn* 4:10; 4:19). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (*Rom* 5:8).
4. CCC 609: "By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (*Jn* 13:1; 15:13). In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men (Cf. *Heb* 2:10,17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9). Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (*Jn* 10:18). Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death (Cf. *Jn* 18:4-6; *Mt* 26:53)."

F. What does this mystery mean for our lives?

1. **Mark 14:33-42** ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

2. Must learn to interpret the Cross as the privileged place of sharing in Jesus Mission.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 4:7-12** ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.
 - b. **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ⁴ who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. ⁶ If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.
3. **John 12:23-27** ²³ And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. ²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.
4. CCC 618: "The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men" (*1 Tim 2:5*). But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men (*GS 22 § 5*; cf. § 2). He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]", (*Mt 16:24*) for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps"(*1 Pet 2:21*). In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries (Cf *Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24*). This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering (Cf. *Lk 2:35*)."

“Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven” (St. Rose of Lima, cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* [Louvain, 1668]).