THE DAILY BREAD

The Creed of the Apostles



The Son

Incarnation, Redemption, Resurrection

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

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INTRODUCTION

The Question Everything Turns On

A man can love Jesus and still be unable to say who he is. He can pray to Christ, receive him in the Eucharist, feel his heart stirred at the name of the Lord, and yet, if a friend asked him to explain the Incarnation, or what exactly the Cross accomplished, or why the Resurrection matters, he would find himself unable to answer. He loves Jesus deeply, and he cannot say, with any precision, who Jesus is or what Jesus did. This is the condition of a great many faithful Catholic men, and it is the gap this book exists to close.

Acts of the Apostles introduced Christ throughout, but it never stopped to teach explicit Christology, the doctrine of who Jesus is and what he accomplished. It was concerned with encounter, with a man meeting the living Christ, and that encounter is the foundation of everything. But a man who has met Christ must go on to understand him, and there is no more important understanding in the whole of the faith than this: who Jesus is, and what he did. This is the most important doctrinal station in the Creed program, because everything else depends on it. If a man is wrong about who Christ is, or vague about what he accomplished, the whole faith goes soft at its center. And if a man is clear about Christ, everything else falls into place around that clarity.

But who do you say that I am? — Matthew 16:15

That is the question Jesus put to his disciples, and it is the question everything turns on. Who do you say that I am? Not who do the crowds say, not what is the general opinion, but who do you say. A man′s whole faith rests on his answer. And the answer the Church gives, the answer this book will unfold, is staggering: that Jesus of Nazareth is God become man, that in him the eternal God took on human flesh, lived a human life, died a human death, and rose again in a transformed and glorified humanity, and that in doing so he accomplished the salvation of the world. This is the central claim of the Christian faith, and to understand it is to understand the heart of everything.

We will take it in order. We will look at the Incarnation, the astonishing truth that God became man, and what it means that Jesus is fully God and fully man. We will ask why God had to become man to save us. We will turn to the Redemption, to what the Cross actually accomplished, taking care to understand it rightly, not as a vengeful Father demanding blood, but as a God who out of love entered our suffering and death to transform them from within. We will come to the Resurrection, the foundation of the whole faith, without which, Paul says, our faith is in vain. We will see the meaning of the

Ascension and the promise of Christ's return. And we will ask what all of this means for a man's salvation right now, and why it is the core of every witness he will ever give. This is the doctrinal heart of the faith, and its aim is that a man come to know, clearly and deeply, who Jesus is and what he did.

The aim is that you be able to answer the question everything turns on, who do you say that I am, not with a vague affection but with the clear and staggering truth: that Jesus is God become man, who died and rose to save you, and that this changes everything.

CHAPTER ONE

The Word Became Flesh

Fully God, Fully Man

Begin with the Incarnation, the truth from which all Christology flows, and one of the most staggering claims ever made: that the eternal God, the Creator of all things, became a man. Not appeared as a man, not sent a message through a man, but became a man, taking on human flesh and living a genuinely human life, while remaining fully God.

The Astonishing Claim

The opening of John's Gospel states it with unmatched force: in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and then, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word, the eternal Son of God, who is God, through whom all things were made, became flesh, took on a real human nature, was born as an infant, grew, hungered, wept, suffered, and died. This is the Incarnation, and its claim is almost too large to take in: that the infinite, eternal God, without ceasing to be God, took on a finite, mortal human nature and lived among us as one of us. The God who holds the universe in being became a helpless child. The Creator entered his creation as a creature. This is the central marvel of the Christian faith, and everything else flows from it. God became man. Let the weight of that settle, for it is the most astonishing thing ever claimed, and the Church claims it as sober truth.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. — John 1:14

Not God in Disguise, Not a Mere Man

It is essential to state precisely what the Incarnation is, because there are several tempting distortions that miss it. The Incarnation does not mean that God merely

appeared to be a man while remaining only God, a divine being in a human costume; Jesus was genuinely, fully human, with a real human body and a real human soul, truly one of us. Nor does it mean that Jesus was merely an extraordinary man, a great teacher or prophet whom God specially favored or adopted; he was genuinely, fully God, the eternal Son, not a creature however exalted. And it does not mean that Jesus was some blend or mixture of the two, half-God and half-man, or a third thing that is neither fully one nor the other. The Church teaches, with hard-won precision, that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, true God and true man, complete in divinity and complete in humanity, the two natures united in one Person without confusion, without mixture, without either being diminished. He is not God in disguise, not a divinized man, not a blend, but the one eternal Son of God who has taken to himself a complete human nature, so that he is at once fully God and fully man.

One Person, Two Natures

The precise way the Church states this is worth a man′s understanding, because it guards the truth against the distortions. In Jesus Christ there is one Person, the eternal Son of God, and in that one Person two natures, divine and human, united but not confused. It is always the one divine Person, the Son, who acts, but he acts now through a genuine human nature as well as his divine nature, so that the same Person who is eternally God is also truly this man, Jesus of Nazareth. This means it is truly God who is born of Mary, truly God who hungers and weeps, truly God who suffers and dies on the Cross, because the one who does these things in his human nature is the divine Person of the Son. And it means that this man, Jesus, is truly God, to be worshiped as God, because he is the divine Person of the Son living a human life. One Person, two natures, fully God and fully man: this is the Incarnation, stated precisely, and holding onto this precision guards the whole faith, for if Jesus were less than fully God or less than fully man, he could not be what he is or do what he did.

The Hinge of History

The Incarnation has a moment, and that moment is the Annunciation, when the angel came to Mary and, at her yes, the eternal Word took flesh in her womb. This is the hinge of the whole of history, the point on which everything turns. Before it, the world awaited its salvation; at it, God entered the world in the flesh; after it, everything is different, for God himself is now among us as one of us. The moment a young woman in an obscure town said let it be done to me according to your word, and the Word became flesh within her, the axis of all history turned, and the long ages of waiting gave way to the age of salvation. The whole story of the world pivots on that moment, the coming of God in the flesh at the Annunciation, so that history itself is divided by it, all that came before

pointing toward it and all that comes after flowing from it. When a man grasps the Incarnation, he grasps that the most important event in the history of the world was not a battle or an empire or a discovery, but the quiet moment when God took flesh in the womb of a girl in Nazareth, the hinge on which all of history turns.

CHAPTER TWO

Why God Became Man

The Necessity of the Incarnation

Grant that God became man; the next question is why. Why would the infinite God take on human flesh and live a human life? The answer reveals the whole logic of salvation, and it comes down to this: God became man in order to save man, and only the God-man could accomplish that salvation.

The Problem of the Gap

To see why the Incarnation was necessary, see first the problem it solves. Sin had opened an infinite gap between God and man, a breach that man, on his own, could not repair. The offense of sin against the infinite God was, in a sense, infinite, beyond the power of any mere creature to make right; and man, wounded by sin, could not lift himself back to God across the gap his sin had opened. Man needed to be reconciled to God, but man could not accomplish the reconciliation, because the gap was infinite and man was finite and wounded. Only God could bridge such a gap. And yet it was man who had sinned, man who needed to make amends, man who needed to be reconciled; a reconciliation accomplished entirely from God's side, with no human participation, would not repair humanity from within. The problem, then, required someone who was both God, able to bridge the infinite gap, and man, able to represent and repair humanity from within. It required a God-man.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. — 1 Timothy 2:5

The Bridge Only He Could Be

This is exactly what the Incarnation provides: one who is both fully God and fully man, and therefore able to be the bridge that reconciles the two. As God, Christ can bridge the infinite gap, his actions carrying the infinite worth that reconciliation required. As man, he can represent humanity, act on behalf of the human race, repair humanity from

within, offer to God a human obedience and a human love in the very nature that had sinned. The God-man is the one mediator, standing between God and man because he is both, joining the two in his own Person, and accomplishing in himself the reconciliation that neither God alone acting from outside nor man alone acting from below could achieve. This is why the Incarnation was necessary for our salvation: because only one who was both God and man could bridge the gap sin had opened, and Christ is exactly that, the God-man, the one mediator, the bridge that no one else could be. The whole logic of salvation runs through the Incarnation, for without the God-man, there is no reconciliation of God and man.

God Came to Us

There is something in this that a man should not pass over: that God did not wait for us to climb to him, which we could not do, but came down to us. The whole movement of the Incarnation is God descending, taking the initiative, crossing the distance we could not cross, coming to us in our helplessness because we could not come to him. This reveals the heart of God, that he would go to such lengths, would become one of us, would enter our condition entirely, to save us. He did not stand off at a distance and demand that we make our way to him; he came, all the way down, into our flesh, into our suffering, into our death, to bring us back. The Incarnation is, before it is anything else, the measure of God′s love, the God who would become man rather than lose us, who crossed every distance to reach us. And a man who grasps the Incarnation grasps first of all this: how far God was willing to go, out of love, to save him.

What It Says About You

The Incarnation also says something staggering about the dignity of the human person, and of a man′s own humanity. If God himself took on human nature, then human nature must be capable of bearing God, must have a dignity and a capacity almost beyond imagining. The God who could have saved us any way he chose chose to become one of us, to take human flesh and a human soul, to live a human life, and in doing so he raised human nature to an astonishing dignity, uniting it forever to himself. This means a man′s own humanity, the flesh and blood and ordinary human life he might think little of, is capable of union with God, has been touched and honored and raised up by the God who shared it. The Incarnation is the great affirmation of the human, the proof that human life is not something to be escaped or despised but something God himself embraced and dignified beyond measure. And it means that a man′s ordinary human life, his body, his work, his relationships, his suffering, all of it is capable of being united to God, sanctified, drawn up into the divine life, because God himself took on exactly such a life. The Incarnation dignifies everything human, and a man who grasps it sees his own humanity,

and every human life, in a wholly new light: as capable of God, honored by God, raised up by the God who became man.

CHAPTER THREE

What the Cross Accomplished

The Redemption, Rightly Understood

Now to the Redemption, to what Christ actually accomplished by his death on the Cross, and here a man must take special care, because this doctrine is often badly misunderstood, distorted into a caricature that obscures the God of love it actually reveals. Understanding the Cross rightly is essential, for it is the very heart of our salvation.

The Caricature to Avoid

A common distortion presents the Redemption like this: that God was angry at sinful humanity and demanded blood to satisfy his wrath, and that he took out his anger on his own innocent Son instead of on us, punishing Jesus in our place to vent a wrath that had to be vented on someone. This picture makes God the Father into a wrathful figure demanding violence, and the Cross into an act of divine anger poured out on an innocent victim. It is a caricature, and it distorts the God the Cross actually reveals. The Father is not a vengeful figure who needed blood to be appeased; he is the God who so loved the world that he gave his Son, not to vent wrath, but to save. The Cross is not the Father punishing the Son to satisfy his anger; it is the whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, acting together in love to save the world. A man must set aside this caricature, for it obscures the love that is the very meaning of the Cross.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son. — John 3:16

Love That Enters and Transforms

What, then, did the Cross accomplish, rightly understood? At its heart, the Redemption is an act of love: God, in Christ, entering into human suffering and death, the very things sin had brought into the world, and transforming them from within by his loving obedience. Sin had brought suffering and death and separation from God; and Christ, out of love, entered into all of it, took upon himself the full weight of human suffering and death, and, offering himself in perfect love and obedience to the Father, transformed these things from the inside, turning the instruments of sin's victory into the means of its

defeat. On the Cross, Christ offered to the Father, on behalf of humanity, the perfect love and obedience that sin had refused, and he did so precisely in the depths of the suffering and death that sin had caused, so that his loving self-offering reached into the very worst of the human condition and redeemed it from within. The Cross is God′s love entering the darkest places of human existence, suffering, abandonment, death, and transforming them by the power of a love stronger than all of them. This is redemption: not wrath appeased, but love descending into the depths of our ruin and transforming it from the inside.

What Was Accomplished

Through this loving self-offering, Christ accomplished our salvation in several dimensions the tradition has always held together. He offered to the Father the perfect sacrifice of love and obedience that reconciled humanity to God, repairing from within the breach that sin had opened. He ransomed us from the slavery of sin and death, paying, in the currency of love and self-gift, the price of our liberation, freeing us from the powers that held us captive. He reconciled us to God, ending the estrangement, opening again the way to communion with the Father. And he transformed suffering and death themselves, so that for those united to him they become not merely the wages of sin but the passage to life. All of this Christ accomplished on the Cross, not by satisfying a divine bloodlust, but by the loving self-offering of the God-man, who entered our ruin and redeemed it from within. The Cross is the deepest revelation of God′s love, the length to which love would go to save us, and it is the very heart of our salvation, the act by which we were reconciled, ransomed, and set free.

He Went All the Way Down

There is something in the Cross that should reach a man in the hardest places of his own life, and it is this: that Christ went all the way down, into the very worst of what a human being can suffer, so that there is no depth of human anguish where he has not already been. He knew betrayal by his friends, abandonment, injustice, mockery, physical agony, and, in his cry from the Cross, even the experience of God-forsakenness, the sense of being abandoned by God himself. There is no darkness of human suffering that Christ did not enter, no depth of anguish where a suffering man is alone, because Christ has been there before him, has suffered it himself, has redeemed it from within. This means that when a man suffers, even in the worst of it, he is not alone; the Son of God has been there, has known that darkness, and is with him in it, having transformed even the deepest suffering into a place where God is found rather than absent. The Cross reveals a God who did not save us from a safe distance but came all the way down into our worst, so that there is no place a man can go, however dark, where Christ has not already been

and where his redeeming love cannot reach. This is a truth to hold onto in the hardest seasons: he went all the way down, and so he is with you, even there.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Foundation of Everything

The Resurrection

If the Cross is the heart of our salvation, the Resurrection is the foundation of the whole faith, and Paul states its importance with startling bluntness: if Christ has not been raised, our faith is in vain. Everything rests on the Resurrection, and understanding it rightly is essential.

Not Resuscitation, But Transformation

First, understand what the Resurrection is and is not. It is not resuscitation, the mere return of a dead man to his former life. Others in the Gospels were raised from death, like Lazarus, but they returned to ordinary mortal life and would die again; that is resuscitation, a return to the same life. The Resurrection of Christ is something entirely different and entirely new: not a return to his former mortal life but a passage into a new and glorified life, a transformed humanity that can never die again, the first instance of a wholly new mode of human existence. The risen Christ is not a resuscitated corpse but a transformed and glorified human being, his body real and physical yet now transfigured, no longer subject to death, the first fruits of an entirely new creation. This distinction matters enormously: the Resurrection is not Christ coming back to the old life but Christ passing into a new one, the new and glorified life of the resurrection, which he is the first to enter and into which he will bring all who are his.

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. — 1 Corinthians 15:17

The First Fruits of the New Creation

This is why Paul calls the risen Christ the first fruits, the first of the harvest, the first to enter the new and glorified life that all the redeemed will one day share. The Resurrection is not only about Christ; it is the beginning of the new creation, the first instance of the transformed and deathless life that is the destiny of all who belong to him. Because Christ is raised, those united to him will also be raised, will also pass into the glorified and deathless life, of which his Resurrection is the first fruits and the guarantee. The

Resurrection thus opens the door to eternal life for all humanity, the new creation begun in Christ and destined to be shared by all who are his. This is the ground of Christian hope: that death has been conquered, not merely for Christ but for all who are his, and that the glorified life of the risen Christ is the destiny toward which the whole redeemed creation is moving. The Resurrection is the first light of the new creation, the beginning of the deathless life, the foundation of every Christian hope.

Why Everything Depends on It

Paul does not exaggerate when he says that without the Resurrection the faith is in vain. If Christ were not raised, then death was not conquered, sin was not defeated, the Cross was a tragic failure rather than a victory, and there is no hope of eternal life; the whole Christian faith would collapse. But Christ is raised, and this changes everything: it vindicates his claims, reveals him as truly the Son of God, confirms that his death accomplished what he said it would, conquers death itself, and opens the door to eternal life. The Resurrection is not an optional appendix to the faith but its very foundation, the event on which everything rests and without which nothing stands. This is why the first Christians proclaimed the Resurrection above all else, why it is the heart of the Gospel they announced, why the whole faith is built upon it. Christ is risen, and because he is risen, death is conquered, the Cross is victory, and eternal life is opened to all who are his. Everything depends on the Resurrection, and the Resurrection is true.

The Witnesses Who Would Not Recant

A man may ask why we should believe the Resurrection actually happened, and while faith is finally a gift, there is a consideration worth weighing. The first witnesses to the risen Christ, the apostles and the women and the others who claimed to have seen him alive, staked their lives on their testimony and, in many cases, died for it, refusing to recant even under persecution and death. Now, men will die for a belief they hold sincerely but wrongly; sincerity is no proof of truth. But these were not men who merely held a belief; they claimed to have seen something with their own eyes, to have eaten with the risen Christ, touched him, spoken with him. And men do not die for what they know to be a lie. If the apostles had invented the Resurrection, had stolen the body or fabricated the appearances, they would have known it was false, and it is very hard to believe that so many would have gone to their deaths defending what they themselves knew to be a fabrication, gaining nothing by it but suffering and death. Their willingness to die rather than recant a claim about what they had seen with their own eyes is a serious historical consideration, not a proof that compels but a witness that weighs, pointing toward the reality of what they claimed. Something happened that transformed frightened men who had fled at the crucifixion into fearless witnesses who would die

rather than deny that they had seen the Lord alive. The Church has always held that what happened was exactly what they said: that Christ was truly raised, and that they truly saw him.

CHAPTER FIVE

He Did Not Leave

The Ascension and the Promise of Return

The story does not end with the Resurrection. Christ ascended to the Father, and he will come again, and both of these truths, professed in the Creed, complete the picture of who Christ is and what he is doing now and will do at the end.

The Ascension: Not Absence, But Nearness

Forty days after his Resurrection, the Scriptures tell us, Christ ascended to the Father, taking his glorified humanity into heaven. It might seem that this is a departure, a leaving, that Christ withdrew and is now absent. But the Ascension does not mean absence; it means a new and deeper mode of presence. In ascending, Christ took our human nature into the heart of God, so that humanity is now, in him, seated at the right hand of the Father, and he intercedes for us eternally as our high priest. And far from abandoning his people, he ascended precisely in order to send the Holy Spirit, who makes him present to the whole Church in every place and time, more intimately present than he could be while confined to one place in his earthly life. So the Ascension is not the loss of Christ but the beginning of his universal presence through the Spirit, and the taking of our humanity into heaven, where he intercedes for us always. He did not leave us; he took our nature to the Father, sent his Spirit to be with us, and remains present to his Church, interceding for us eternally, until he comes again.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. — Matthew 28:20

The Promise of Return

The Creed professes that Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and that his kingdom will have no end. This is the Church's sure hope: that the Christ who came once in humility, in the Incarnation, will come again in glory at the end of time, to complete his work, to judge all humanity, to defeat every evil finally, and to establish the fullness of his kingdom forever. History is not an aimless drift but a movement toward this final coming of Christ, when he will return in glory and set all

things right, wiping away every tear, defeating death finally, and bringing the redeemed into the fullness of eternal life. This coming, which the tradition calls the second coming or the Parousia, is the final chapter of the story, the return of the King in glory, the completion of everything the Incarnation began. A man lives, then, between the two comings: the first, in which Christ came in humility to save, and the second, in which he will come in glory to complete. And he lives in hope of that second coming, when the Lord who saved him will return in glory to bring him, and all the redeemed, into the everlasting kingdom.

The Whole Arc

Seen together, the mysteries of the Son form a single magnificent arc: the eternal Son became man in the Incarnation; lived a human life; died on the Cross to redeem us; rose again in glory, conquering death; ascended to the Father, taking our humanity into heaven and sending his Spirit; and will come again in glory to complete his work and establish his kingdom forever. This is the whole story of salvation, the arc of the Son from his coming to his return, and it is the heart of the faith a man professes in the Creed. Each part depends on the others: the Incarnation makes the redemption possible, the Cross accomplishes it, the Resurrection vindicates and completes it, the Ascension applies it through the Spirit, and the second coming will bring it to its fullness. To know Christ is to know this whole arc, the eternal Son who came, died, rose, ascended, and will return, accomplishing in it all the salvation of the world.

CHAPTER SIX

What It Means for You Now

Salvation in the Present Tense

All of this doctrine, precise and magnificent as it is, is not meant to stay in the mind as abstract truth. It bears directly on a man's life right now, on his salvation in the present tense, and the doctrinal understanding must become, finally, a personal reality. What does all this mean for you, now?

It Was For You

The first and most important application is intensely personal: all of this was for you. The eternal Son became man for you; he died on the Cross for you; he rose again for you; he intercedes for you now; he will come again for you. The doctrine of the Son is not merely a set of truths about events long ago and far away; it is the story of what God did for love

of you, personally, so that you might be saved. When a man grasps this, the doctrine becomes personal and overwhelming: that God himself became man and died and rose, and did it all out of love for him, to save him. The right response to this is not merely intellectual assent but gratitude, love, and self-gift, the whole heart's response to a God who went to such lengths for love of a man. Let the doctrine become personal: he did all this for you, and it calls for the response of your whole life.

The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. — Galatians 2:20

Salvation Available Now

The salvation Christ accomplished is not only a past event or a future hope but a present reality, available to a man now, through faith and the sacraments. What Christ did on the Cross and in the Resurrection is applied to a man now, in his baptism, in the Eucharist, in Confession, in the whole sacramental life through which the fruits of Christ's saving work reach him personally. Salvation is not merely something that happened long ago or something that will happen at the end; it is something happening now, as the grace won by Christ is poured into a man's life through the sacraments and faith, saving him, transforming him, drawing him into the new life of the risen Christ. A man is being saved now, drawn now into the life Christ won, and the doctrine of the Son is the truth about the salvation that is reaching him in the present tense, through the Church and her sacraments. Christ's saving work is not a distant transaction but a present grace, available now, transforming a man's life now, drawing him now into the risen life of the Son.

Living the Risen Life

Finally, because Christ is risen and a man is united to him, the man is called to live even now, in some measure, the risen life, sharing already in the victory of Christ over sin and death. The Resurrection is not only a future hope but a present power, and a man united to the risen Christ shares even now in his risen life, empowered to live in the freedom and hope and new life that the Resurrection won. This means a man need not live defeated by sin or paralyzed by the fear of death, for he is united to the One who conquered both, and he can live, even now, in the victory and hope of the Resurrection. To live the risen life is to live as one who belongs to the victorious Christ, sharing his victory, walking in his new life, unafraid of death because it has been conquered, freed from the tyranny of sin because it has been defeated. The doctrine of the Son, fully grasped, empowers a man to live now in the victory Christ won, the risen life already begun in those who belong to the risen Lord.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Core of Every Witness

Why This Is Where Mission Begins

This doctrine, the doctrine of who Christ is and what he did, is not only the heart of a man's own faith but the core of every witness he will ever give, and here the Creed reaches forward to the Mission that will follow. A man cannot share the Gospel without being able to explain who Jesus is and what he accomplished, and so this station is the doctrinal foundation of all evangelization.

You Cannot Share What You Cannot Explain

Evangelization, the sharing of the faith, is finally the sharing of Christ, the announcement of who Jesus is and what he did. And a man cannot announce what he cannot explain. If someone asks a man why he is a Christian, or who Jesus really is, or what the Cross was about, the man's ability to bear witness depends entirely on whether he understands these things himself. A man vague about the Incarnation, confused about the Redemption, unclear about the Resurrection, cannot share the Gospel, because he does not himself clearly grasp the Gospel he would share. This is why the doctrinal understanding this book builds is not merely for a man's own faith but for his mission: because the day will come when he is asked to explain who Jesus is, and his witness will depend on whether he can. The clarity a man gains here is the equipment he will need when Mission calls him to share the faith, the core content of every witness he will give.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. — 1 Corinthians 2:2

The Heart of the Message

When a man does come to share the faith, this is the heart of the message he will bring: that God loves us so much that he became one of us in Christ; that Christ died on the Cross out of love to save us from sin and death; and that Christ rose from the dead, conquering death and opening eternal life to all who believe. This is the core of the Gospel, the essential message, and it is exactly the doctrine of the Son that this book has unfolded. A man who understands the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Resurrection has the heart of the Christian message, and can share it, in his own words, with anyone God sends him: God became man, died for love of you, and rose to give you eternal life. This is the message that has converted the world, and it is the message a man carries once he understands who Christ is and what he did. The doctrine of the Son is

thus the very content of evangelization, the heart of every witness, the core of the Gospel a man will one day be sent to share.

Know Him, to Make Him Known

The whole movement, then, is from knowing Christ to making him known. A man first comes to know Christ, in the encounter of Acts and now in the understanding of Creed, grasping who Jesus is and what he did, and this knowledge is meant to overflow into witness, into making Christ known to others. The deeper a man′s grasp of Christ, the more he has to share, and the more compelling his witness, because he speaks of a Christ he truly knows and understands. This is why the doctrinal deepening of the Creed leads naturally to the mission of sharing, for a man who has come to know Christ deeply is equipped and, in a sense, compelled to make him known. Know Christ, this book has urged, understand who he is and what he did; and then, when Mission calls, make him known, share the Christ you have come to understand, bring the heart of the Gospel to everyone God sends you. To know him is to be readied to make him known, and the doctrine of the Son is where both the knowing and the equipping for the making-known begin.

CONCLUSION

Who You Say He Is

Return to the question everything turns on, the question Christ put to his disciples and puts now to every man: who do you say that I am? This book has unfolded the Church′s answer, the doctrine of the Son, the most important teaching in the whole of the faith. Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God become man, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. He became man in order to save man, the one bridge between God and humanity that only the God-man could be. He died on the Cross, not to satisfy a vengeful Father, but out of love, entering our suffering and death to transform them from within, reconciling us to God and ransoming us from sin and death. He rose again, not merely resuscitated but transformed into the glorified life of the new creation, the first fruits of the resurrection that all his own will share, the foundation without which the faith would be in vain. He ascended to the Father, taking our humanity into heaven and sending his Spirit, present now to his Church and interceding for us always. And he will come again in glory to complete his work and establish his kingdom forever.

This is who Jesus is, and this is what he did, and it is the heart of everything. All of it was for you: the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, all of it accomplished out of love to save you, and available to you now through faith and the sacraments, drawing you even now into the risen life of the Son. And all of it is the core of the witness you will one day give, the heart of the Gospel you will be sent to share, for a man cannot make Christ known until he knows, clearly and deeply, who Christ is and what he did.

So answer the question, not with a vague affection, but with the clear and staggering truth: Jesus is God become man, who died and rose to save me. Let that answer sink to the depths of you, and let it become both the ground of your own faith and the message of your witness. Know him, this book has urged, understand the Son in whom the whole faith centers, the eternal Word made flesh, crucified and risen for your salvation. And then, having come to know him, prepare to make him known, for the world is full of men who love Jesus and cannot say who he is, and it needs men who can say, clearly and with conviction, who he is and what he did.

You believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God. Now you are coming to know, in depth, who that is: God become man, crucified and risen for you and for the salvation of the world. Hold onto this, for everything turns on it, and it is the truest and most staggering thing a man can know: that God so loved the world, and so loved you, that he became one of us, and died, and rose, to bring us home. That is who he is. Say it, believe it, live it, and prepare to give it away.

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