

# The Catholic Parish of Petworth & Midhurst

## West Sussex

Fr Peter's Homily for The Third Sunday of Lent  
Sunday March 7th 2021

### The Creed III

I have been speaking with you over the last two Sundays about the Creed that we say at Mass. In particular I was saying that it is less about a recitation of doctrines, and more about conversion. It is much more about who we believe in than what we believe; and who we believe in, along with what they are like, is what makes us the people that we are. The person I am turning into with each passing day depends on the people that I place my trust in. There is an old piece of wisdom which says that you should surround yourself with the people that you want to become more and more like, the people you admire most. Who we place our trust in really makes a difference to who we are becoming.

Today we are looking at 'I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ'. The Creed goes on to set out some facts about who he is. In a way this is the heart of the Creed, because this document was produced in the Fourth Century when people were arguing about just who – or what - Jesus was. Was he a really special man that God adopted as a special Son? Was he God pretending in some way to be human, 'dressing up' as a person? No to both of those. The Creed tells that he was neither of those things, he is God AND he is man: God from God, but also 'he became man'. We find it hard to imagine how that can be, someone is both fully God and fully man, and that is as it should be, if we could easily understand the ways of God then he wouldn't really be much of a God.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one Lord. He doesn't need to compete with others, he is in a class of his own. This brings us great freedom. To whom can I give my absolute obedience, my unquestioning loyalty? To a politician or a dictator? No. To a good and worthy cause? No. To a charity? No. To progress, or to some political movement or theory? No. They all have feet of clay. To a priest, or a Bishop, or even a Pope? No, they too have feet of clay and all of them are subjects, they are not Lords. They, we, need to say 'I believe in one Lord...' because it reminds us that we are not him. There is only one Lord, one person who can command our unquestioning loyalty, and having established that fact we are set free. We do not have to spend our lives looking for a hero good enough to throw ourselves at. We have the hero, and he longs for our worship, not because he needs it but because he knows that we need to give it.

And there is something else about calling out 'Jesus is Lord', which we mustn't lose sight of. The first Christians knew this, and it shook the known world. If you say 'Jesus is Lord', then that must mean that Caesar isn't. But Caesars liked to think that they were Lord, so there is little wonder that the first Christians were not popular. Just by saying 'Jesus is Lord' they were saying to Caesar: 'you are not Lord, you are a subject like the rest of us'. When we say 'Jesus is Lord' we are reminding ourselves,

and our secular masters, that there is only one Lord, and loyal as we are to our country it must always take second place to that other country which will, please God, be our home not just for 70 or 80 years, but for eternity. If Jesus is Lord, he must be the only one.

Jesus is begotten, not created (as the Christmas carol says). He was born of the Father before all ages. From the very beginning Jesus was, born of the Father. If it were not so, if there was a time when Jesus was not, that would also mean there was a time when God was not Father, and that cannot be so. When we meet Jesus in the scriptures, or in the sacraments, or in the Church, we meet one who is older than time itself. Nothing has ever happened that did not happen in his time. Jesus is not a man of the first century, or a person of the twenty first century like all of us: he is a man of every moment, from beginning to end. He is relevant, proper, at home, in every time and every place.

He is the Son of God, and never is this clearer than in today's Gospel when he reclaims his Father's House, and returns it to its proper us.

So what does 'consubstantial' mean? It means God from God and light from light, the water that pours from the fountain (Hilary of Rome). 'The Father and I are one' (John 10.30) or, as one of the fathers put it, 'When Christ comes, God will be seen by men' (Irenaeus).

But why did he come? Why not stay in Heaven and let us worship from afar, dispensing his gifts from a safe distance? He came for our salvation. So what? The Second Vatican Council said that Christ 'fully reveals man to man himself and makes his final calling clear' (GS n22). Jesus came to save us from not really knowing what a human life could be. He came to save us from second best, from getting by; he came to save us from never really living. The glory of God is man fully alive (Irenaeus) – the more like Christ we become the more alive we really are. He came to save us from idolatry, from worshipping created things rather than their creator; he came to save us from sin, from pursuing a life of grasping instead of a life of giving. He shows us what that life looks like: You do it like this! By emptying himself and leaving it all behind he is out for what he can give, not what he can get. Imagine how the world would be if we all lived like that. Awesome! This memorial of the incarnation is where we bow during the creed. Christ came down to us, and so we let our heads sink a little lower at such a great mystery.

And, through God's power at work in the spirit, Jesus is incarnate – he is enfleshed within the virgin Mary. He is now one of us. He has come close. He has pitched his tent among us, living among us here on earth so that one day we will be able to pitch our tents with him in Heaven and make our homes there. He becomes human so that humans can take their place in God. The world is like the Garden of Eden again, with God walking through it in the cool of the evening.

What I believe makes me what I am. Jesus is Lord, the only one there is. He is ancient, and new. He shows me what human life can be, and challenges me to join him in it so that one day I can join him in his divine life. Surely that is enough for one week!