

Faith Tidbits..
a little food for thought
and some knowledge
about your
Catholic faith

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This monthly series will answer questions you always wondered about or questions you never even thought to ask... all about our Catholic Faith. If you have a question you want answered, call Diane Hardick at 633-3672.

1. *What do they mean when they talk about “Christology from above” and “Christology from below”?*

First of all, “Christology” is the theological study of Jesus Christ. Christology “from above” tends to emphasize the divinity of Christ. A major example of that is the Gospel of John. John begins with “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....”. Christ was the Word made flesh who came down from heaven and became man. Then we hear over and over in John Jesus saying that “it is not my hour” as he awaits “the hour” when he will be raised on the cross and return to the Father. As you read the Gospel of John, you will see and feel the divinity of the Jesus as he speaks of himself as “I am....the Good Shepherd, the Bread come down from Heaven, etc.”. In John, Jesus is in charge, even of his own arrest and death.

On the other hand, “Christology from below” begins with the Jesus of history and tends to emphasize his humanity. He is the human Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke who was born in a stable, grew in wisdom and knowledge, and asks the Father in the Garden, “take this cup from me.” It is important to stress that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Although in the past many centuries, Christology “from above” was emphasized, today we see more of a focus on Christology “from below” which underscores that the Incarnation must be historical because it must touch historical beings. It must be an event in history to touch the actual history of the world. This Christology gives us a Jesus who called God “*abba*”—“papa”; a Jesus who is as close to you as you are to yourself.

Whether the focus is on Christology “from above” or “from below”, both must be held in creative tension within the mystery of the Incarnation, for we believe Jesus is both truly human and truly God.

2. *Here are some more of those “Catholic” words and their definitions:*

- **ex cathedra:** literally, “from the chair.” Refers to infallible, or definitive, teachings of the Pope as earthly head of the Church. The Pope has only spoken *ex cathedra* in announcing the Immaculate Conception of Mary and her Assumption into heaven
- **exegesis-biblical:** the scientific interpretation of the texts of Sacred Scripture; studying the meaning of the biblical text within its historical context—what does the text tell us about the author, his/her audience; the historical events happening at the time that might influence how the text was written; the theology or focus of the author, etc. Scientific interpretation is done by Scripture Scholars who study the texts.
- **inerrancy:** the immunity of Sacred Scripture from fundamental error about God and the things of God, rooted in the understanding that Sacred Scripture was written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and thus is the Word of God.
- **justification:** the event by which God, acting in Jesus Christ, makes us holy (just). The ultimate effect of justification is salvation.
- **magisterium:** the teaching authority of the Church, which belongs to some by office (Pope and bishops). Others contribute to the Teaching Mission of the Church by scholarly competence (theologians).