



iBelieve Session 3. Jesus Christ: human and divine

Creed Reference – I believe in...Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord



Song - Use me by Dewitt Jones

If you can use anything Lord you can use me
If you can use anything Lord, you can use me
Touch my hands Lord, and my feet
Touch my heart Lord, speak through me
If you can use anything Lord, you can use me

Scripture - Philippians 2:5-8

“Let the same mind be in you as was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.”

Prayer - Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me

Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.

Amen

The prayer of St Patrick (387-493)

Activity

Background: The Church grappled for a long time with the problem of how to express the relation between divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ. The Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 agreed that the divinity and the humanity in the one person Jesus are united together 'without division or confusion'.

This statement drew a line under arguments that suggested that Jesus' humanity was merely an appearance; or that there are two different persons in Christ, one human and one divine; or that in Jesus Christ, the human nature was completely absorbed into the divine nature.

This mystery is hard to grasp, and yet we are familiar with examples of Jesus's humanity and divinity through scripture. Knowing that Jesus was at all times both completely human and completely divine, we're going to explore some familiar stories of his life and imagine the conversations that might have happened around them.

Task: Give small groups one of the pieces of scripture suggested below. Get them to read it, then discuss what happened, identifying what aspects of Jesus' behaviour or attitudes indicate his humanity and divinity. Get them to think about why he may have acted in this way.

Once everyone has a grasp of their scripture, invite them to create a drama telling the story, including a 'part two', which imagines the conversations that might have happened after each event, between Jesus and the other key characters. What are their reactions to what happened? What do the other people say to Jesus and/or to each other? What does Jesus say or do? What kind of conversation do they have? Does what happened affect their view of Jesus, or their relationship with him?

Give the groups time to prepare their drama, then get them to present them back to the whole group.

Debrief: What kind of examples have we seen in the dramas that demonstrate Jesus' divinity, and his humanity? Were they always separate and distinct, or 'without division or confusion'? Why do you think this is? What happens if we overemphasise Jesus' humanity, or overemphasise his divinity? What is the relationship between them? What can we learn from this for our own lives? How are we 'divine' or 'holy'?

The boy Jesus in the temple - Luke 2:41-51

When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

The wedding at Cana - John 2:1-11

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus heals – Luke 8:40-56

While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead' do not trouble the teacher any longer." When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved." When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all weeping and wailing for her, but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and she got up at once, then he directed them to give her something to eat.

Jesus cleanses the temple – Mark 11:15-18

And he entered the temple and began to drive out all those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations', but you have made it a den of robbers."

Tool | Letter to Jesus

Many people find it easier to pray in this structured way than if you asked them to pray without any parameters. In fact, this is a way of 'praying without knowing it', and can be a particularly helpful way of introducing young people to prayer if they find it hard to connect, or think that prayer is irrelevant to them.

Give everybody a pen and plenty of paper (plain and lined, coloured and plain if possible), and invite them to find their own space in the room and get comfortable. Once they are in position and the room is quiet and settled, explain that they now have the opportunity to write a letter to Jesus. The letter can be about anything they want – something that has stayed with them from a session or discussion, something that's happening in their life, something they're struggling with, or anything else that is on their minds. Nobody will read it, or know what they have put – it's between them and Jesus, so they don't need to worry about spelling mistakes, or having neat handwriting.

It may help people to enter into this activity by creating a peaceful, reflective atmosphere: a few candles, some gentle music, possibly dimming the lights.

The depth to which people enter this activity will vary depending on their age, maturity, faith development, and relationships within the group. Some people feel self-conscious for a while before they settle into it, and for others, the words will flow as soon as they start to write. Ten minutes may be enough, or they may need half an hour.

Once the time is up, give each person an envelope for them to put their letter in. Get them to seal the envelope and take it home with them. They may choose never to look at it again, but encourage them to keep it in case they want to come back to it another time. If they journal regularly, they can keep their letter in their journal, and may want to write more letters as part of their regular journaling.

Finish by gathering everyone together and offering up all the prayers by saying the Our Father or Hail Mary.

Tip: Letter writing can also be a tool to use in Reconciliation services (write a letter to someone you need to apologise to, or someone who you have hurt) or as part of an Affirmation process (write a letter to someone telling them what you like about them, or what they're good at). You can also get people to write a letter to themselves, then collect them in and post them one month, or six months, or one year later.