

RCIA

RCIA HO Class 10 Life of Christ Part 2

At the age of about 30 Jesus begins his public ministry. The four Gospels do not recount the events of his life in exactly the same way, however they agree on many of the bigger events of Jesus' life.

He calls his first disciples, called the Twelve Apostles, is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River while the voice of the Father is heard, and the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove, i.e. revealing to us that God is a Trinity of Persons. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus' first miracle is worked at the wedding feast at Cana when he changes water into wine. Jesus travels about for three years preaching, teaching, healing, and forgiving sins. He prepares himself by his work and prayer for the great mission he has come to the world to accomplish: his suffering, death and resurrection which will redeem the world and open the gates of heaven to all believers.

We recall that mankind lost access to "Paradise" (Heaven) with the sin of Adam and Eve which was transmitted to all humanity through generation (Original Sin). Jesus Christ redeemed, or "bought back" sinful humanity by offering his sinless humanity to God the Father as a perfect sacrifice on behalf of all the rest of us.

We will begin our look at these events beginning with the Last Supper. Jesus and his apostles are in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. The "Last Supper" is, in fact, the Passover meal. The Church commemorates this event on Holy Thursday with a Mass in the evening. Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) because He replaces the Passover lambs. The Book of Exodus (chapter 13) records the institution of the Passover, by means of which God delivered the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians. Each family was to sacrifice an unblemished lamb in a prescribed manner and paint the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses. Those who were marked by the blood of the lamb were "passed over" and spared destruction. This Passover event was commemorated each year by the Jews as Jesus did at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday. While the Passover lambs were being sacrificed on the altars in the temple on Good Friday, Jesus was sacrificed on the altar of the Cross. As the Israelites were protected by the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their houses, we are freed from slavery to sin by the Blood of the Lamb of God.

The Book of Revelation records St. John's vision of heaven in which he sees a lamb that has been slain. The knife in the side of the lamb recalls the spear thrust into the side of Christ on the Cross. The divine life of grace flowing into the world from the Trinity is represented by the white stream. The primary and ordinary way we receive this grace is through the seven sacraments. At the Last Supper Jesus prophesies that Judas, one of the Twelve, will betray him to the Jewish authorities who want him killed because he is challenging their power and control over the people and accusing them of not doing what God would have them do. He is arrested and tried by both Herod (the Jewish authority figure) and Pontius Pilate (the Roman authority). Pilate is involved because only the Roman authority can declare a sentence of death, and this is what the Jewish authorities want.

Having been condemned to death Jesus is scourged, or beaten, and led out to be crucified. His Crucifixion takes place from about noon to 3:00 on Good Friday. The letters INRI usually seen on a crucifix are the first letters of the Latin words "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews." Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had these words affixed to the Cross in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. These were the languages spoken by Jesus and his contemporaries. Greek was the language of commerce, Latin was the language of the Roman Empire that controlled most of the known world at the time, and Hebrew was the language of the Jewish people.

When he dies Jesus is buried in a tomb at which guards are stationed to make sure that none of his followers comes to steal his body and claim that he has risen from the dead as he has prophesied.

The Creeds tell us that on Holy Saturday Jesus "descended to the dead". This is referred to as the Harrowing of Hell when Jesus liberated all the just men and women who had been waiting for him to "open the gates of heaven" for them. Remember that, because of sin (Adam and Eve), no one could enter heaven until Jesus' sacrifice was complete.

The word Hell here does not refer to "Hell" as the place of the eternally damned. Before Jesus Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, opening the gates of heaven closed by Adam's sin, it was impossible for anyone to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. By His descent to the abode of the Dead (aka the Limbo of the Fathers) Christ freed all those just and righteous ones who had gone before Him and awaited the Kingdom.

On the Third Day the Lord rose from the dead, i.e. the Resurrection on what we know as Easter Sunday. In honor of the Resurrection the early Christians changed the day of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. During the next forty days he appeared to the apostles and disciples demonstrating to them that he had, in fact, risen from the dead. St. Paul claims that Jesus was seen by over five hundred witnesses who were still alive in his lifetime (1 Cor 15:1-9). The Lord's Ascension, glorified body and soul into Heaven, took place forty days after Easter and is celebrated each year by the Church on Ascension Thursday. For the next ten days the apostles were in hiding wondering what would happen to them now that the Lord had returned to heaven. On the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, as the Lord had promised, and strengthened them to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations. The Church celebrates Pentecost Sunday 50 days after Easter, and the Sacrament of Confirmation is often administered on the day because of its connection to the Holy Spirit.

Sometime after the Ascension, we don't know when, but when Mary's time on earth had come to an end, she was assumed body and soul into heaven. Mary's Assumption differs from Jesus' Ascension in that Jesus went to heaven under his own power because he is God. Mary is not God and had to be taken, or assumed, into heaven by God. The Church celebrates the Assumption on August 15.

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Answer the following questions (the following terms will be helpful): Hidden Years, Pentecost, Easter, Ascension, Nativity, Finding in the Temple, Last Supper, Good Friday, Epiphany, Bethlehem, Palestine (Middle East), Resurrection,

- a. 1) What do we call Jesus' last supper with His apostles?
- b. 2) Which two sacraments did He institute at that time?
- c. 3) We can say that the last supper was the first _____, and the apostles were the first _____.
- d. 4) On what day and at what time did Jesus die on the cross?
- e. 5) Why did He allow Himself to be killed?
- f. 6) What do we call Jesus' rising from the dead?
- g. 7) On what day of the week did that happen?
- h. 8) Did anybody see it happen? How can we know it is true?
- i. 9) 40 days after His Resurrection Jesus went into heaven body and soul. What do we call that?
- j. 10) On the Feast of Pentecost Jesus sent _____ to strengthen the apostles so that they would not be afraid to tell people about Jesus and His Church.