

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 12

The Creed – Part 3

For us men and for our salvation, *Matt 1.21; Acts 4.12; 2 Tim 2.10*
he came down from heaven, *John 6.38; 16.28; 1 Cor 15.47*
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate *Luke 1.30-35; John 1.14*
of the Virgin Mary, and became man. *Gal 4.4; Matt 1.18-20; Luke 24.39*

The Creed now moves to our salvation. God saves us by becoming one of us. This is the central part of the Creed. It is for us human beings that the Son became a human. Without ceasing to be what He was from eternity (being God), the Son took on what He was not (being human). St John says, 'The Word was made flesh', which is what 'incarnate' describes (*in-carnatus* = en-fleshed). The Word is incarnate by the Holy Spirit, not by any man, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. That He 'became man' refers to the Word becoming an embryo in Mary; He became a man, fully human, at His conception, not at His birth.

Jesus thus has two births: from the Father in eternity, and from Mary at a certain point in time (2000 years ago). He has two natures: divine (because He has always been God) and human (because He became man, and remains man). But Jesus is one only *person*. This one person, because He has two natures, could do things only God can do (e.g. forgive sins), and also did what men can do (eat, drink, sleep, get angry, go to weddings, weep at Gethsemane, die on a cross, etc.) – but the One who did both sets of things is just one person, the Eternal Son of God.

God became what we are (man) so that we may become what He is (by grace, sharing His divine life). The Incarnation, 'God becoming what we are', is the key moment of the history of our salvation, the great humbling God permits for Himself, in order to enter His own creation, and to share our life and our nature. Because of this 'humiliation of God', that is, humbly entering our world, we also 'humiliate' ourselves, that is humble ourselves before the mystery of the Incarnation. It is at this point in the creed '*and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man*' that we bow our heads profoundly – adding this physical gesture to our spiritual humbling before the mystery of 'God becoming what we are'. Twice a year, instead of bowing at this point, we kneel instead: on the Annunciation (25 March) and on Christmas (25 December). The connection between the two is fairly obvious. A clue: they are nine months' apart, and both commemorate the Incarnation in a special way: the former Christ's conception, and the latter His birth.