

Is Jesus God?

When most Catholics, church-going or otherwise, see this question: Is Jesus God, they probably roll their eyes and consider it completely irrelevant to themselves. Of course, yeah, I'm willing to say that Jesus is God, no problem. But as a priest, I have come to realize that, in fact, this question is largely unsettled in the minds of many. If this question is absolutely settled, beyond question, that Jesus *is* God, then I have to take what He says seriously. If I don't, then I cannot claim to really believe, deep down at the very core of my being, that the answer to this question is yes. Yet how many people really do this? If a person says, for example, something like: oh well, I make it to Mass "when I can" – i.e., when it's not inconvenient, when I don't have something more important like work or vacation or whatever it might be – what they are saying is that *I* decide what, when, and where constitutes worship of God, not Jesus; Jesus (God) does not get to say what constitutes worship of God, I do. I set myself on a throne that belongs to Him alone, which means that I do not, cannot, say: yes, *Jesus* is God; in effect the person's answer is actually: well, no, not really, I don't really believe Jesus is God, actually I believe I'm a god unto myself. To answer truthfully that Jesus is God requires some degree of humility. If a person says: sure, I'll say that Jesus is God, but then says I decide what is right, they are duplicitous; I have set *myself* on the throne that belongs to God alone. If I say: oh, but I can use sexuality however it suits me, I decide what marriage is, and so on (common themes today), then I do not (at least not yet) truly accept that *Jesus* is God; I can convert, but I certainly cannot truly answer at that point that yes, *Jesus* is God. Let us not be too quick to pat ourselves on the back if those do not apply. If, like the rich young man, I put myself up on any kind of pedestal, if I engage in self-righteousness, for example, and believe it to be alright, I'm justified in it, then the issue of: is *Jesus* God, is not settled in my mind. My answer is still, no, I reserve that to myself. If I set aside the sacrament of Confession, a sacrament that Jesus created, I have decided that no, I do not accept Jesus as God, that throne is my own. I can certainly still be a sinner and answer, truthfully, that Jesus is God because when I see my sins I acknowledge that they are in fact sins and I'm sorry for them, sorry enough to know that I need to and want to do better. The issue here, then, is not sinfulness flowing out of human weakness – that's a different struggle – the issue is: who sits on the throne, do I accept what He teaches, what He commands, the authority of His Church to bind and loosen and then strive to conform myself to His commands, or not? So settle the question one way or another. If the answer is no, Jesus is not God, I am, then don't pretend otherwise. If the answer is yes, then accept His throne and all of the glory that goes with that will be yours. Is the small bit of humility needed to do even this much so bad? The day *will* come when *every* single human being will answer: no, that humility was not something bad at all, and then each will be either 1) eternally miserable that they did not answer yes sooner, or 2) eternally grateful that they did.

This question is also intimately connected to the solemnity for this weekend: The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, also called Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) Sunday. If Jesus is God, then what He teaches is true. It is true, then, that there is a Heaven and there is a hell and that both of these are real possibilities for each of us. It is true that I have free will and thus that what I choose determines whether I get to Heaven or end up in hell. If Jesus is God, then I know that the saints are in Heaven and thus the lives of the saints serve as examples of excellence, good teachers, of living out what our Lord teaches. You will not find a single saint without a great love for and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. The love and devotion of the saints is not something like: oh yeah, Communion is ok; sure, I'll say it's Jesus; oh Mass is ok, I guess I don't have any big objections to it, even though it wouldn't hurt to "jazz it up" some, you know, make it "interesting" (i.e., at least a little bit entertaining). This is not the devotion and love of the saints for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Holy Eucharist. There is nothing casual – take it or leave it, it's ok – about the saint's love and devotion of the Eucharist. Consider a few quotes from the saints regarding the Eucharist:

St Faustina: "All the good that is in me is due to Holy Communion. I owe everything to it. I feel this holy fire has transformed me completely." "I will not allow myself to be so absorbed in the whirlwind of work as to forget about God. I will spend all my free moments at the feet of the Master hidden in the Blessed Sacrament."

St Peter Eymard (called "the Apostle of the Holy Eucharist): "Until we have a passionate love for our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament we shall accomplish *nothing*."

St Therese of Lisieux: “Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love...”

St Francis of Assisi: “What does the poor man do at the rich man’s door, the sick man in the presence of his physician, the thirsty man at a limpid stream? What they do, I do before the Eucharistic God. I pray. I adore. I love.”

St Maximilian Kolbe: “If angels could be jealous of men, they would be so for one reason: Holy Communion.”

Pope St John Paul II: “We must understand that in order 'to do', we must first learn 'to be', that is to say, in the sweet company of Jesus in adoration.”

St Alphonsus Ligouri: “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.”

St Josemaria Escriva: “When you approach the tabernacle remember that he has been waiting for you for twenty centuries.”

This is but a small sampling of the devotion of the saints to the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass but it is perhaps enough to demonstrate it. With the testimony of the saints in mind, let us come back to the special solemnity of Corpus Christi and its origins. This too came from our Lord through one of His saints. In particular, it came about through a vision given, repeatedly, by our Lord to St Julianna in the 1200’s. In this vision, St Julianna saw a full moon with one dark spot in it. Our Lord told her that the dark spot was a missing feast – that of the Body and Blood of Christ. St Julianna related this to a member of the clergy and the message eventually worked its way through the Magisterium of the Church, starting with Julianna’s own bishop. It was then Pope Urban IV who promulgated it as a feast for the universal (whole) Church in the year 1264. Why this Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ? Our Lord Himself imparted the reasons to St Julianna:

- First, in order that Catholic doctrine might receive aid from the institution of this festival at a time when the faith of the world was growing cold and heresies were rife.
- Second, the faithful *who love and seek truth and piety* could draw from this source of life new strength and vigor to walk continually in the way of virtue.
- Third, irreverence and sacrilegious behavior toward the Divine Majesty in the Blessed Sacrament might, by sincere and profound adoration, be extirpated [wiped out] and repaired.

In the space left, let’s take up the question of my own belief in, devotion to, and love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. **A lack of it is a sign of death, a burning zeal for it is a sign of progression to eternal life.** Do I desire to get to Mass as often as I possibly can? It is my hope and plan to have at least one evening weekday Mass at each parish to make it more available to everyone. Do I care? Will I strive to be there just for the sake of being at Mass and being with our Lord? Do I realize the state of purity that I need to be in to go to Holy Communion? That it is our Lord’s command that I be “in a state of grace?” Am I willing to make the sacrifice of going to Confession so as to make myself as suitable of a receptacle as I possibly can for our Lord? It is also my hope and my plan to make each church available, with a light always on, for prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament 24 hours a day. Do I care? Will I take advantage of it? Am I willing to treat the church as a sacred place because of the One who resides there, maintaining, for example, a sacred and reverent silence? How do I approach Holy Communion? Mindful of the Lord, eager to receive Him or casually and distracted? One of the practices that began along with the promulgation of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Eucharist was Corpus Christi processions, especially on Corpus Christi Sunday. This entails putting our Lord (the Eucharist) in a monstrance (like for Exposition) and then processing “through town” with people following along behind praying and singing hymns. It is an honor that our Lord has given us to enthrone Him as King and process with Him. It is also my hope and plan to start Corpus Christi processions and celebrations on Corpus Christi Sunday. Do I look forward to it with eager anticipation?

What would it be like if this pastorate developed this kind of devotion to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? I suppose this question brings us full circle, back to the question of: Is Jesus God? God bless you, Fr Kuhn.