

Lesson 1: Amazed and Afraid: Jesus Both God and Human

(Note: All questions are formulated directly from the DVD presentations, in sequence.)

1. Take a few moments to reflect on your own view of Jesus. Who is he to you? How did you come to this belief?
2. What is the central claim of Christianity?
3. Jesus spent much of his public ministry healing people of sickness and disease, and liberating people from spiritual oppression. What does this reveal about the heart of God?
4. What is the key thing that makes Jesus different than all other religious leaders and founders of religions in history?
5. Fr. Barron discusses how Jesus compels a choice from every human being --- what is this choice?
6. What did Fr. Barron mean by “domesticating” Jesus? Why must this be avoided?
7. Fr. Barron explained how Jesus did not shy away from overturning social customs of his time. Give some examples of this.
8. Discuss the significance of Jesus cleansing the Jerusalem Temple. Why was this event such a provocative act? How did the various groups affected by his actions react to being confronted and corrected by him?
9. Why does God want us to praise him --- is he lacking something that our praise supplies? Or is there a different reason?
10. Discuss and contrast the various kinds of power possessed by Caesar Augustus with the coming of Jesus. How do these insights deepen the meaning of the Nativity and the Christmas season for you?
11. In what sense is Jesus a warrior ---- how does Jesus “fight” according to Fr. Barron?
12. Why is the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead so critical to Christianity?
13. Lists the four tasks from the Old Testament that Jesus came to accomplish, according to Fr. Barron’s summary.
14. Based upon Fr. Barron’s comparing and contrasting of Caesar and Jesus, what does it mean to call Jesus “Lord”? Reflect on the significance of Jesus as “Lord” for your own life.

Some Reflection and Discussion Questions

Lesson 2:

1. How would you define “happiness”?
2. Turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5 and read the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12). Jesus lists certain things that make one blessed or happy. How does your definition of happiness compare with the things Jesus mentions?
3. What does Fr. Barron mention as God’s most distinctive characteristic?
4. What four things did St. Thomas Aquinas say human beings use as substitutes for their longing for God?
5. The human tendency to try to substitute these things for God is traditionally called what?
6. What modern term does Fr. Barron suggest can be used in place of this term?
7. What does the saying, “turn the other cheek,” mean to you?
8. Reflect upon Fr. Barron’s explanation of “turning the other cheek.” Did his explanation shed any light upon this saying for you? Explain your answer.
9. Did Fr. Barron’s discussion of the Parable of the Prodigal Son lead to any new insights as to the meaning of the parable?
10. List the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (see paragraph no. 2447 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church):
11. List the words/phrases that Fr. Barron uses to define the Greek term “metanoia”?

Catholicism Series on DVD – Fr. Robert Barron
Some Reflection and Discussion Questions

8/2013

Lesson 3: The Ineffable Mystery of God

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1. In chapter three of the Book of Exodus, Moses asked God about His name. God's reply was "I Am Who I AM." According to Fr. Barron, what is the meaning of this name?
2. Summarize and discuss St. Thomas Aquinas' argument for the existence of God based upon "contingency," as explained by Fr. Barron. Can you think of anything that contains within itself the reason for its own existence --- other than God? Draw out the implications of this.
3. Summarize and discuss Fr. Barron's explanation of Joseph Ratzinger's (now Pope Benedict XVI) argument for the existence of God based on the "intelligibility" of the world.
4. What does the term "transcendence" mean as an attribute of God?
5. What does the term "imminence" mean as an attribute of God?
6. Summarize the atheistic argument against the existence of God based upon the existence of evil.
7. Was there any particular aspect of Fr. Barron's discussion of the problem of evil that was especially helpful?
8. In what sense is evil a "lack" or a "privation"?
9. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all believe that there is only one God – but what is distinctive about the Christian doctrine about this one God?
10. Discuss Fr. Barron's explanation of the Trinity. Was this helpful to you?

Lesson 4: Mary, the Mother of God

1. How would you characterize your understanding of, and relationship to, Mary prior to watching this episode?
2. What does Fr. Barron mean when he says that Mary was not a “sentimental” figure in the Bible? Give some examples.
3. Explain what it means to call Mary the mother of God.
4. Discuss the meaning of the symbolism of Mary as “the moon.” How does this image help in explaining the role of Mary in God’s plan?
5. Explain the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.
6. Explain the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. What is the difference between the Assumption and the Ascension?
7. Discuss the significance of the appearances of Our Lady of Guadalupe for Mexico.
8. Give some examples from the life of Mary of how she is a model of discipleship for Christians.

Lesson 5: The Indispensable Men: Peter, Paul and the Missionary Adventure

St. Peter

1. Regarding the scene where Peter walks on the water, reflect on the fact that this was his idea. Now picture yourself stepping out of a boat on the sea to literally walk across the water --- what kind of faith would you need to do that? What does this imply about Peter's trust in Jesus?
2. Why do great saints so often see themselves as "great sinners"?
3. How did Peter know that Jesus was the Son of God?
4. Fr. Barron said the key to understanding Jesus was to *love him deeply*. How is this principle manifested in the life of Peter --- how does Peter's love of Jesus stand out?
5. How did Peter die?
6. Reflect on one of your favorite scenes from the life of St. Peter. Why does it move you or appeal to you?

St. Paul

1. Why does Fr. Barron insist we must be weary of "domesticating" Christ?
2. Why was Saul (Paul) so zealous about stopping the earliest Christians from flourishing?
3. What happened to Saul during his journey to Damascus?
4. How did St. Paul make clear that he meant that Jesus *literally* rose from the dead *bodily*? Why was this point so critical to him?
5. Fr. Barron presents the figure of St. Peter as representing *office, order and structure* --- and the figure of St. Paul as representing *mission*. Why does the Church need both "Peter" and "Paul"?
6. Reflect on one of your favorite scenes or teachings from the life of St. Paul. Why does it move you or appeal to you?

Lesson 6

A Body Both Suffering and Glorious: The Mystical Union of Christ and the Church

1. Until now, what would you say has been your primary image of the Church? (institution, community, movement, “people of God,” or some other image, etc.)
2. Did Fr. Barron’s explanation of the Church as the “Sacrament of Christ” and the “Mystical Body of Christ” lead to any new insights in your own understanding of the Church? Explain your answer.
3. According to Fr. Barron, what does it mean to call the Church “one”?
4. Why does Fr. Barron stress the importance of being able to have a good religious argument?
5. What are the two extremes that he mentions many people fall into, instead of having a good religious argument?
6. According to Fr. Barron, what does it mean to call the Church “*holy*”?
7. And how can we still say the Church is *holy* when some of her members through history have done such cruel, stupid and sinful things --- even in the name of the Church?
8. According to Fr. Barron, what does it mean to call the Church “*catholic*”?
9. According to Fr. Barron, what does it mean to call the Church “*apostolic*”?
10. Fr. Barron speaks of the need for a “*living* voice of authority.” What did he mean by this?

Lesson 7

Word Made Flesh, True Bread of Heaven: The Mystery of the Liturgy and the Eucharist

1. Fr. Barron presents the Mass as something we do as an end in itself --- because it has infinite value *in itself* --- and not because of its “usefulness.” What are some examples of other things we do in day to day life simply because they have value in themselves, and not because of their “usefulness”?
2. If God does not need our prayers and sacrifices, why does He want us to do them?
3. Reflect on the words Jesus spoke at Capernaum about His flesh and blood. How does Fr. Barron’s explanation illumine your own understanding of what Jesus meant?
4. Was Fr. Barron’s explanation of “transubstantiation” helpful to you? Explain your answer.
5. Draw out some implications of the quote from Flannery O’Connor about the Eucharist and about the Catholic Church in general.
6. Reflect on this entire episode for a moment. What part would you say was most helpful or memorable to you?

Reflection and Discussion Questions

Lesson 8

1. The “Saints” can at times seem such towering figures --- so different from us --- that their examples seem unreachable. How do we get past that perception and come to see ourselves as called to be saints as well?
2. What do you find most unique or impressive about Katharine Drexel’s life?
3. When the Pope said to Katharine, “*You be that missionary,*” why do you think she was so overcome with emotion --- what do you think was going through her mind?
4. What are some qualities of Therese of Lisieux that intrigued or interested you the most? Why?
5. What does it mean to you to be a “little flower”? What are some ways you can work to become a “little flower”?
6. Fr. Barron told the story of someone asking St. Thomas Aquinas, “how does one become a saint?” and St. Thomas answered, “by willing it!” What does that mean to you?
7. How can the example of Edith Stein help us in facing difficulties?
8. Are you facing any challenges right now that require a special degree of courage?
9. Mother Teresa spoke of a ‘radical simplifying’ of her life. What are some benefits of such simplicity --- and how does one achieve it?
10. Do the four women presented by Fr. Barron strike you as unreal or too ‘other-worldly’ for you to relate to them? Why or why not?
11. Compare and contrast the four women. What are some unique characteristics of each that appeal to people today? Which of the four women most impress you? Why?
12. Do you think the world needs heroes? Do you have a spiritual hero that helps you on your journey toward sainthood?

Lesson 9

The Fire of His Love: Prayer and the Life of the Spirit

1. How did St. John of Damascus define prayer?
2. Reflect on the life of Thomas Merton as presented by Fr. Barron. Were there any points with which you could especially relate?
3. Reflect on the life of St. John of the Cross. Were there any particular insights or points of contact with your own experience?
4. Reflect on St. Teresa of Avila. How does her castle imagery help to illumine the spiritual life?
5. How does the parent/child relationship shed light on prayers of petition --- on how God relates to us and our own prayers of petition?
6. Reflect on Fr. Barron's concluding thoughts about Thomas Merton. How does a life of prayer help to draw you closer to other people and enable you to love them deeply?

Reflection and Discussion Questions

Lesson 10

1. What does the term “Last Things” refer to?
2. How would you describe purgatory?
3. What is the difference between hell and purgatory?
4. Did Fr. Barron’s depiction of angels differ from how you have thought of them? Explain your answer.
5. Close your eyes and try to imagine the best idea of heaven you can. Now read 1 Corinthians 2:9. Reflect on the fact that the best heaven you can come up with, is not even close to the reality. How can this realization help in day to day life?
6. Did you know that we will one day be reunited to our bodies (though glorified like Jesus’ risen body) in heaven? How does this fact affect your idea of heaven?
7. Now that you have completed all ten episodes of this series, reflect for a moment on what you have learned. Discuss some aspects of the series that have been most helpful to you.