

Did Jesus Know He Was Divine?

The Human Knowledge of Jesus/Did Jesus Know He was God?

I can't take credit for much of this article. It was born from works of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Fr. William Most, Fr. John Hardon and Fr. James T. O'Connor. To them I give the credit for enlightening many on this subject. This will be a multi-part series on the subject. I hope it will help. I thank them for their great works.

Unfortunately, confusion reigns on the matter of the human knowledge of Jesus. Today, it is almost fashionable to say He was ignorant. Was Jesus confused? Did He know He was the Messiah? Or divine? Did He know much about the afterlife? Did He have at least one superstition? Did He have only the mentality of a Jew of the first century? Wild as it may seem, some prominent scholars charge Him on all the above counts, and more too!

Let's separate what some scholars say and what the Church actually teaches. Let's begin with Pope Pius XII. In his great Encyclical on the *Mystical Body*, on June 29, 1943, he rejected all such charges. He taught: "By that blessed vision which He enjoyed when just received in the womb of the Mother of God, He has all the members of the Mystical Body continuously and perpetually present to Himself." What does that mean? His human soul saw the vision of God at once, and in it all knowledge is at hand. In another Encyclical, *Sempiternus Rex*, in 1951, the same Pope complained many were not accepting his teaching. Then in still another Encyclical *Haurietis aquas*, in 1956, he clearly repeated his earlier teaching. Further, on July 24, 1966, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Pope Paul VI complained many were still not accepting this important teaching. Clearly, the repeated teaching shows the Church means to make this definite and definitive, namely, that the human soul of Jesus, from the first instant, saw the vision of God, in which all knowledge is accessible. (Let me make one point clear; some of those who object do not really mean that a divine HE was ignorant—they mean His human mind did not register some things).

The stubbornness of those who reject is remarkable. For on two counts this teaching rates as infallible: 1) the repetition, as we said, shows the intention to make a thing definitive. So it is infallible. 2) Pius XII, in his Encyclical *Humani Generis* of 1950 told us that if the Popes in their official journal deliberately take a position on something then being debated in theology, it is removed from debate, and comes under the promise of Christ (Lk. 10:16): "He who hears you, hears me." We know of course, a promise of Christ cannot fail. All these questions about Jesus' human knowledge was ignited by a book, by P. Galtier, *L'unité du Christ*, which appeared in 1939—followed soon, in 1943, by the Encyclical of Pius XII, and then by still more texts. *So this teaching is infallible on two counts.*¹ Remember, he repeated his insistence in 1951 and 1956, clearly showing the intent to make it definitive. The Holy Office under Pope Paul VI confirmed this.

If we use our common sense we should be able to see for ourselves that the human mind of Jesus not only happened to have that vision, but also could not lack it. We can see it in the following way. For any soul to reach that vision, the beatific vision (which happens to others in heaven), two things are needed: 1) the power of the soul to see needs to be elevated by grace; of course that was true in Jesus. 2) The divinity should join itself directly to the human mind, without even an image in-between, so that the mind may see God. Now in an ordinary case, if we put together human body and human soul, that is automatically a human person. However, that did NOT happen in the case of Jesus (to say so would be Nestorianism, which states there were two "Persons" in Christ)—because His human mind, and whole humanity, was assumed, taken over, by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore His human mind was joined to the divinity, even more closely than happens in the case of an ordinary soul—for when an ordinary soul receives that vision, it remains a separate person. But in Jesus, there was only ONE Person, the Divine Person. So His human soul could NOT possibly have lacked the vision. No image, being finite, could let us really know God, who is infinite. Therefore, in view of that structure, that vision did not just happen, it could not have been otherwise. In fact, it was super-vision, for the union of His human soul to the divinity was closer than that of any ordinary soul in the vision, since the soul of Christ was not a separate person.

Part Two next week.

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¹ "The Consciousness of Christ" by Fr. William Most PhD

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Part Two, cont'd from last week

...In other souls, this vision causes complete blessedness. In Jesus, there was in a way, blessedness, but only on the highest point of His soul, as it were. On the other hand, the vision revealed to Him, in merciless detail, everything He would have to suffer in His Passion. I don't know about you, but if I foresee something dreadful coming, I can take refuge in the thought that maybe it won't be so bad or maybe it won't happen. But the vision in Jesus could be called merciless. It showed Him what was to come with distressing clarity and absolute infallibility. This union of His divine nature and His human nature is called Hypostatic Union.

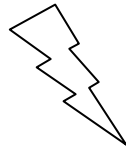
(It would be well here to point out the definition of the words "Hypostatic Union" when speaking of what the Church teaches on this matter. From Fr. John Hardon's "Modern Catholic Dictionary" we read: "The union of the human and divine natures in the ONE divine Person of Christ. At the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), the Church declared that the two natures of Christ are joined "in one person and one hypostasis" (Denziger #302), where hypostasis means one substance. It was used to answer the Nestorian error of a merely accidental union of the two natures in Christ. The phrase "hypostatic union" was adopted a century later, at the fifth general Council at Constantinople (533 A.D.). It is an adequate expression of Catholic doctrine about Jesus Christ that in Him are two perfect natures, divine and human; that the divine Person takes to Himself, includes in his Person a human nature; that the incarnate Son of God is an individual, complete substance; and that the union of the two natures is real (against Arius), no mere indwelling of God in a man (against Nestorius), with a rational soul (against Apollinaris), and the divinity remains unchanged (against Eutyches).)

(So, to simplify it, was Jesus Christ a human Person? No. Was Jesus Christ a divine Person? Yes. Was He a divine Person who assumed a human nature? Yes.)

Living a life under such a vision was dreadfully painful. I know that when I have a long-running trouble, my skin wears thin. In Him it did something like that. Yes, His divinity could have protected Him from that. But He had resolved, when He "emptied Himself" (kenosis) (Phil 2:7) not to use His power for His own comfort, only for the sick. So an unprotected humanity would be in unending apprehension. Twice He let us see inside Himself in Luke 12:50: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am constrained until it is accomplished." That is: I have to be plunged into the deep waters of suffering. I am in a tight spot, and I can't get comfortable until I get it over with. Then, about a week before His death, He was speaking to a crowd in Jerusalem, and decided to let us see inside again (John 12:27): "Now my heart is troubled. What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour!" After that, in Gethsemani, the nightmare that was pursuing Him caught up to Him. He could not scream and find it only in a dream; it was there in all its hideous reality. The interior tension ruptured the small blood vessels near the sweat glands resulting literally in a sweat of blood, medically known as hematidrosis. "And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground (Luke 22:44). He even felt fear, as St. Mark's Gospel (14:33) states, "And he took Peter and James and John with him; and he began to fear and be heavy." The fact that He would rise again on the third day could not keep the nails from hurting and the Cross from being less heavy. Again, His divine power could have rescued Him from suffering, but He had resolved not to use that for His own sake. So again, an unprotected humanity could not help shrinking back in horror such as His agony in the garden. This is a most rich doctrine as it lets us see the tremendous suffering Jesus endured from conception on.

Instead of charging Him with such ignorance, we really should be immeasurably grateful that He was willing to go through such a life and such a death. We owe Him reparation, too, for the charges of ignorance.

I would like to recommend Fr. John Hardon's "Modern Catholic Dictionary." It is available from www.lifetime.org. God bless you.



...cont'd from last week. **Some Objections**

There are some who say that Jesus didn't know He was God until His public ministry began; some even say He didn't know who He was till He was on the Cross?! They then present "problems" from Sacred Scripture which supposedly prove their point. Here are some examples.

Objection: In the Gospel of St. Luke (2:42) we read that He advanced in wisdom and age. So the question can be asked, "Was He deficient in wisdom before?"

Answer: No, the Fathers of the Church after St. Athanasius, point out there is a difference between actual growth in wisdom, and growth in manifestation of it, in other words, how much He showed. He measured it out in accord with each point of age.

Objection: In St. Mark's Gospel (13:32) He Himself said He did not know the day of the end of time. Therefore Jesus was ignorant of His divinity.

Answer: Pope St. Gregory the Great solves this problem by saying that He knew the day in His humanity, but not FROM His humanity. In other words, in our terms, the information did register on His human mind, even though His humanity was not the source of that information.

Objection: When His Mother Mary found Him in the temple after He had been "lost" for three days, they (Mary and Joseph) did not understand the words He spoke to them. "How is it you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49)

Answer: It was **NOT** because Our Blessed Mother did not know who He was. It was that She did not understand this strange departure from His usual compliant way of acting. Actually, as soon as the Archangel at the Annunciation told Her He would reign over the house of Jacob forever, She knew at once He was the Messiah—any ordinary Jew would grasp that, for only the Messiah would reign forever. Then I am sure all the prophecies about the Messiah came to her mind as She pondered them in Her heart, including chapter 53 of Isaiah about the lamb being led to the slaughter. Psalm 22 must have come to mind as well which says, "They have pierced my hands and my feet." So She, too, must have suffered all along, together with Him.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

What does the Catechism of the Catholic Church have to say on this subject? It treats it in paragraph #'s 471-474.

#472—"The human soul the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited." Cont'd in #472 below.

Comment: St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that since the human soul or mind of Jesus was finite, created, it could not as it were hold infinite knowledge. Therefore, he said, it knew all that God actually does (finite) but not all that God could do (infinite).

#472—"This is why the Son of God could, when He became man, "increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."(Luke 2:52) He would even have to inquire for Himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. This corresponded to the voluntary emptying of Himself (Kenosis) "taking the form of a slave."

Comment: This has to be understood in proper context. Jesus had, besides the knowledge coming from the vision of God, also an experimental knowledge, i.e., there was a point at which His senses first reported that roses are red. The Fathers of the Church wrestled long with Luke 2:52, until St. Athanasius said there is a distinction between what He always knew, and what He let people see. If at age three He had let people see all that was in His brain, it would have been mind-boggling. So He played it out gradually [*oeconomia* the Greek Fathers called this].

As to Mark 13:32, He said He did not know the day or the hour of the end times. Then Pope St. Gregory, as I mentioned before, came up with the answer. He knew the day “IN his humanity but not FROM his humanity.” DS 475-76. I can cite over 100 Patristic texts on these verses, each with analysis.

So when Christ asks, “Who touched my garment? Or, “How many loaves?” well, this is a tactic teachers use to elicit a response, such as the Father used in saying to Adam: “Adam, where are you?”

#473—“But at the same time this truly human knowledge of God’s Son expressed the divine life of His Person. The human nature of God’s Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God.”

Comment: Not His humanity by itself, but His humanity seeing the vision of God, KNEW ALL. The quote given in the CCC from St. Maximus is unfortunately incomplete. The full text is clear: “The humanity of the Lord, in as much as united to the Word, knew all things, and manifested things divinely suitable. But in as much as the human nature is [thought of as] not united with the divine, it is SAID not to know.” This is the same thought of Pope St. Gregory the Great, and reflects the *oeconomia* of which we spoke above in the other comment. When asked where the body of Lazarus was, He knew by the vision, and also by acquired experimental knowledge at that time. He was merely learning in an experiential way, the things He already knew.

What of the fact that the manuscript evidence for the authenticity of Luke 22:44, on the sweat of blood, is almost evenly divided for and against authenticity? Well, similarly, the account of His mercy to the woman taken in adultery in John is missing in some of the great manuscripts. The reason is clear: they thought it just too much. Similarly here, some copyists would think it just too much. If you follow the trajectory you will see it more clearly: it began with the vision in His human soul at conception, which showed Him everything He had to suffer in horrid detail, infallibly. We go next to Lk 12:50 and John 12:27, which I quoted above. We can see that the anticipation of this suffering was eating on Him all His life long. That would generate the interior tension that would produce hematidrosis, a sweat of blood. So there is no reasonable doubt about the text.

In brief: The Church teaches His human soul saw the vision of divinity from conception, in which He knew all He would suffer. Luke 2:52 saying He grew in wisdom refers to the manifestation, not to an actual growth. Mark 13:32 tells us the source of His knowledge of the day (of the end of the world) was NOT His humanity, even though the day did register in His humanity.