



“I WAS ACTUALLY HAPPY MY MOM MADE ME DO THIS”

A CnC Student Reflection

In one CnC pilot parish, a student questioned whether Jesus was ever truly human. The seminarian teaching the class that evening told her about the ancient heresy of Docetism. Jokingly, he told her that if she wrote a 10 page essay on the subject, he'd make her a Bishop. The next week she handed him this reflection.

We share it because we believe it captures the CnC experience with immediacy and honesty. We're not out to create heretics, but we're proud to play a role in challenging young people to think seriously about their faith. And, we're happy to report that at the end of the program, the author emphatically chose to be confirmed. As she told her very startled, but delighted, Bishop, "my Christology is suspect, but I believe."

Over the past few weeks, I have really begun to question what I believed in. This might sound funny, but I had never really thought about it before. I grew up saying The Lord's Prayer, The Nicene Creed and things like that without ever thinking about what the words meant. Sure I memorized them, I might even be able to recite them backwards, but for me they were just words that didn't yet have a meaning.

My parents have been teaching me about God for as long as I can remember. I was of course baptized as most children are and I grew up going to church here at St. Paul's every Sunday. For me, this seemed more like a ritual rather than something I ever really wanted to do. I remember kicking, screaming and crying about how I hated church, didn't want to go, and I didn't believe in God so why should it matter if I was there or not? Eventually I began accepting the fact that no matter how much I begged my mom to let me stay home and be with my friends, I would still end up going. So I went without a fuss, but I hated every minute of it.



And yet even though I hated it, I still had an interest as to what this was all about. Which brings me back to how I memorized all these words and sayings to such extent that I felt like I could have done the service myself.

As I grew up I became more and more involved in the church itself, which ended up making it more interesting. When I was 8 or 9, I began acolyting regularly and enjoying it. As time passed I moved up and became a crucifer, although also fun that job came with a few more responsibilities. Along with this I also helped my mom with Altar and Flower Guild, so I was becoming more and more involved. Yet I did these things without really knowing the true meaning. I still didn't know if I believed in God or not and yet here I was saying all these things about how I did and doing all of these things to serve Him.

I began this class called *CnC* a few weeks ago. In the beginning, I really didn't want to go, but of course my mom made me. I needed to get more involved in God and learn what I really believed in. Of course I complained and said that when I was ready to learn about God I would go and take a class myself. But once again no matter what reasoning I put forth I still ended up going. As the first class approached I became rather anxious although I wasn't sure why. All these people were going to be doing was sitting around and discussing God, how fun. What was there to be nervous about? But I approached this with a negative attitude and also being very sick. When the first class began I saw many of the people that I had grown up sitting around, laughing, eating and just having a good time. After that first class, I couldn't wait for the next one, I was actually happy that my mom made me do this.

Time went on, we all learned a lot in such a short space of time and even the homework assignments given by Caleigh ended up being helpful and relaxing. No matter what these things were expected of us as well as participation in the class. More time passed and I became getting more and more involved with this and more excited about what I was learning.

Finally we had an assignment where we had to pick a favorite song of ours and discuss its meaning with the rest of the class and our mentors. This was for me so far one of the most fun assignments. The song I chose was "You'll Be in My Heart" by Phil Collins. In my opinion it was one of the most beautiful songs. So I filled out the worksheet and went with Caleigh to meet my mentor because she couldn't be there on the actual day. I finally got to find out that my mentor was Betsy Z. and I was very, very glad. We all ate dinner and then had a pretty long discussion



about the songs we both had chosen and their meanings.

Finally Caleigh asked the both of us a question ... "What is church?" Wow, for me that was one of the most difficult questions anyone had ever asked me. What is church? I think it is many different things for everyone. I consider it a place where we worship God and stand up for what we believe in. It's a community, a family, a second home and a place where you know people will care about you. After our discussion about what church was, I went home that night and really really thought about it and what I was saying I believed in.

A few weeks later we had our next difficult assignment, and that was to take the Nicene Creed and write about what it really meant to us. This was pretty tough. So when all of us met again a week later to discuss this it was a major meeting. We all went through the Creed word-by-word and decided what we believed and what we didn't. This was the first time I had actually questioned what I believed. I found out that I disagreed with a lot of things that the Creed stated. The first thing I disagreed with was "he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man." This clearly states that Jesus was believed to be man or human. I realized that I didn't believe in that on so many levels.

How could Jesus be human? Above in the Creed it states "Eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God ..." So Jesus is a part of God right? Caleigh I think brings up the fact that yes he does look like a human, but that does not make him human. In old movies when aliens came down from their planet and onto Earth, they would change their appearance so that they looked like humans in order to study us. Now, just because these aliens appear to be humans at that point in time does that mean that they are, or that they just look like them? No, I believe that on the inside no matter what their appearance they are still aliens, and I'm sure many would agree. They just change the way they look so that no one panics and we go on with our everyday lives and they are able to study us acting as we usually do. I mean face it, if some huge green object with three eyes came to your door asking for a place to stay, you would probably be so scared you wouldn't know what to do.

This is the same concept that Jesus used. Would it be easier to listen to bright light following you around and trying to teach the Word of God? Or would it be easier to listen to a person doing the same thing? In my opinion Jesus took human form in order to teach us the words of God. Next the Creed says, "... he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again ..." If Jesus really was human



how would he have risen? How many humans in the history of our world have died and then come back to life? To my knowledge Jesus is the only one, although I don't even believe that he is human. Remember the story in the bible where God comes down in the form of a man and wrestles with Jacob in the desert? Just because God looks and feels like a human does not make him one.

With this huge debate, Chris, our seminarian, came to the conclusion that I was a Docetist although I really had no idea what that was, so there now I had more homework. The dictionary describes Docetism as "an early Christian doctrine that the sufferings of Christ (Jesus) were apparent and not real and that after the crucifixion he appeared in a spiritual body." But the Roman Catholic Church states Docetism as "an ancient heresy asserting that Jesus lacked full humanity."

I guess really that is what I believe. But really what I think is that I've come a long way from that screaming child who didn't know what she believed into a teenager who is stable enough to question her faith.

Sarah C.

