**Christology Summary**

* The term “Christology” (from Greek terms christos meaning “anointed one” or “Christ” and “Logos” meaning word or idea) refers to the study of Jesus Christ. It often includes such topics as the preexistence and eternal nature of Christ, prophecies form the Hebrew Scriptures about Christ, Christ’s humanity, divinity, and incarnation, as well as the issue of his temptations and sinlessness, his death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation, return, three-fold office (Priest, prophet and king), and states.
* Jesus’ life and teachings have a universal and timeless application, but they should also be seen within the context of the social, religious, and political situation in first-century Palestine.  Jesus was a Jew – Jewish in his background, his thinking, and his spirituality.
* The teachings of Jesus have certain distinctive characteristics, such as: a sense of intimacy with and total dependence on God his Father; identification with the poor and the marginal; conflict with established religious institutions and the use of stories and parables as methods of teaching.
* The Gospels unfolded as theological and historical documents growing out of the memories and reflections of the early Christian communities.  Early Christian writers explained the historical person of Jesus in drawing on their religious and cultural convictions.
* Each of the Gospels has a distinctive Christology.   The different portraits of Jesus were developed by each of the Gospel writers in response to the communities to which they were writing.
  + The author of the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Messiah and the servant/leader, whose glory is revealed through his surrendering himself to death for the sake of humanity.
  + In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is presented as the fulfilment of the prophecies made in the Old Testament, as the Son of God, the new Moses, and as a teacher and law-giver.
  + The writer of Luke's Gospel sees Jesus as the spirit filled and compassionate saviour of the oppressed, both Jews and Gentiles.
  + In John's Gospel, the image of Jesus is of God among us, the Incarnate Word, the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth and the Life**.**
* Using the Christian Scriptures as their basis, the early Church communities developed a number of names/titles to describe Jesus of Nazareth; each of these described a particular aspect of Jesus, and communicated different beliefs about him.  Some of these names/titles include the Christ, Saviour, Lord, Redeemer, Son of God, Son of Man, Lamb of God, the second Adam, the new Moses, Emmanuel, the Word of God, the Good Shepherd, etc.
* Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church gradually developed its ideas about Jesus into a coherent set of beliefs. The questions posed in the centuries following Jesus' death were: “What was the relationship between God and Jesus?”; “How could Jesus be described in terms of the human and divine?”;   “Was Jesus human with divine characteristics?”; “How could Jesus be both fully human and divine?”
* The following are some of the consequent heresies which the Church Councils addressed
  + ***Arianism:*** the belief that Jesus was God's highest creature, but was not himself divine and thus was not equal to God the Father but was created by him. Disputes about these ideas led to the *Council of Nicea 325*which stated that Jesus was of one substance with the Father and was thus divine.
  + ***Nestorianism:*** Nestorius saw two separate persons in Jesus Christ, one divine and the other human, with Mary as the mother of the human Jesus only. The *Council of Ephes*us 431 stated that Christ was truly human, not merely in a human being; that we worship 'one Christ and one Lord', and that Mary was therefore truly the 'Mother of God'.
  + ***Monophysitism:***  Eutyches taught that Jesus was divine but not really human. Disputes about this idea resulted in the *Council of Chalcedon* 451 which stated that Jesus was one divine person with two natures. He was thus both fully human and fully divine. (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 464-483.)
* A contemporary focus of scriptural and theological investigation has been the two 'faces' or 'images' of Jesus: the *Jesus*of H*istory*, the Galilean peasant and charismatic teacher, and the *Christ*of *faith,*the post-resurrection Saviour and Lord.
* Theologians frequently refer to 'ascending' and 'descending' Christology, otherwise known as Christology 'from below' and 'from above'. Both are well-attested in the Scriptures. *Ascending and Descending Christologies*are complementary expressions of the Christian community through the ages seeking to come to terms with the whole mystery of the Person of Jesus.
* *Ascending Christology*centres on the historical Jesus of Nazareth and his life and ministry. It starts with the Jesus who was human like us in all things but sin, who lived and died like us, and whose life, death and resurrection centred on realising the Reign of God. Ascending Christology is strongly attested throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.
* *Descending Christology focuses on Jesus as the Eternal Word of God who came down to earth, taking on human flesh and offering salvation to sinful humanity. In the New Testament, John's Gospel and the Letters of Paul express the perspectives of descending Christology.*