

March 25, 2016 – Good Friday
Jesus Life – from Conception to Crucifixion
Our Life – from Now to Eternity

Today we have a very unusual coincidence, a sacred coincidence.
This coincidence has happened 5 times since 1900.
You will never, ever see this coincidence happen again in your lifetime!
The next time it will happen will be in the year 2157!!!

A hint.

The coincidence has to do with the calendar.

Today's date is March 25th.

Today we traditionally celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation.

The archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she will conceive in her womb and bear the infant Jesus.

So, today we are celebrating both the beginning of the life of Jesus and the very end, the crucifixion of Jesus.

Two great events - conceive and crucify. *[Figure A]*

Either of those events is filled with awesome truths.

How do we possibly try to intellectually and spiritually grasp the two at the very same time?!

Today's Scriptures can offer us some insights into Jesus, his life and his death.

The first reading from Isaiah foreshadows Jesus as a Suffering Servant.

Interestingly, it speaks of birth to death of the Suffering Servant, from his being a "like a sapling" coming from the dry earth to being killed "like a lamb led to the slaughter".

As Christians looked back at the Isaiah describing the Suffering Servant they saw a remarkable portrayal of Jesus, the Jesus who suffered all kinds of abuse during his last day here on earth.

Insults, flogging, crowning with thorns, carrying his cross up the hill to Calvary, being nailed to that very cross, hanging on that cross, crying out on that cross, having a spear thrust into his very side, bursting out with blood and water to the ground below, ... dropping his head as he hung dying on the cross.

The Suffering Servant.

And Mary was there, from conception to crucifixion!

The Second reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews, gives another insight into Jesus, Jesus the priest, the great high priest.

The role of the high priest, as we learned from the Old Testament, was to be a mediator between God and people.

A diagram this would look like this. *[Figure B]*

The high priest would offer prayers to God for the people.

He would speak for God to the people.

The priest would offer sacrifice to God to beg for forgiveness for the sins of the people.

They all knew that the sacrifice was not perfect, that it would never truly suffice for their sins.

But they had to try to show God their sorrow and their needs.

However, with Jesus the reality changed significantly.

Jesus bridged the gap between people and God in a new and unique way. Jesus was both God and human.

The diagram now looks significantly different. *[Figure C]*

Jesus, the Christ, is the Alpha and the Omega.

This connection between us and God has gotten so much more close-knit, so much more intimate, so much more impregnated with love!

At a recent *Generations of Faith*, an event that helps form us in our faith across all ages, an artist by the name of Dan McAfee showed us a piece of his artwork that tries to convey that very intimacy of us and God. It shows the sacred space shared by God and people. *[Figure D]*

Jesus is THE connection between us and God.

He is God.

He is a person just like us ... hands, feet, eyes, brains, a heart.

What a marvelous connection ... God and us, us and God!

While that is both marvelous and mind-boggling at the same time, there is even more!

In the early Church, a great saint, St. Athanasius, spoke some awesome words.

"For the Son of God became man so that we might become God."

900 years later, St. Thomas Aquinas expanded upon that idea.

"The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make us gods."

And it does not end there.

At each Mass, every day, around the whole world, the priest or the deacon says these words as he pours a little water into the cup of wine.

By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

O sure, that's the future for all the great saints!

Yes and no!

Yes it is the future for the great saints ... and it is the future for you and for me!

That's OUR future we are praying about!

Christ has died for our sins.

That means we can really and truly be more like God.

And that means we can really and truly be with God ... for a long, long time!

That beats cake and cookies!

That beats steak and fries!

That beats the life of the Kardashians!

That beats the Super Bowl!

That beats winning the billion dollar lottery!

Yes, today we celebrate life of Jesus here on earth, from Conception to Crucifixion.

But his life did not end at his crucifixion.

And our life is not going to end when they bury us six feet under!

Do we have an "Amen" for that!?