

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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Gospel Reading – John 1:1-18 – Roman Missal

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

Spiritual Reading

From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, pope
Christian, remember your dignity

Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage as he is summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind. And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: *Glory to God in the highest*, and they proclaim *peace to his people on earth* as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being

built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men? Beloved, let us give thanks to God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us he took pity on us, *and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ*, so that in him we might be a new creation. Let us throw off our old nature and all its ways and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh. Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom. Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ. therefore, condemn what we have done but he will save what he himself has done in us. We were not good, but God had pity on us and sent his Son to die, not for good men but for bad ones, not for the just but for the wicked. Yes, Christ died for the ungodly. Notice what is written next: One will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. Perhaps someone can be found who will dare to die for a good man; but for the unjust man, for the wicked one, the sinner, who would be willing to die except Christ alone who is so just that he justifies even the unjust? And so, my brothers, we had no good works, for all our works were evil. Yet although men's actions were such, God in his mercy did not abandon men. He sent his Son to redeem us, not with gold or silver but at the price of his blood poured out for us. Christ, the spotless lamb, became the sacrificial victim, led to the slaughter for the sheep that were blemished—if indeed one can say that they were blemished and not entirely corrupt. Such is the grace we have received! Let us live so as to be worthy of that great grace, and not do injury to it. So mighty is the physician who has come to us that he has healed all our sins! If we choose to be sick once again, we will not only harm ourselves, but show ingratitude to the physician as well. Let us then follow Christ's paths which he has revealed to us, above all the path of humility, which he himself became for us. He showed us that path by his precepts, and he himself followed it by his suffering on our behalf. In order to die for us—because as God he could not die—the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The immortal One took on mortality that he might die for us, and by dying put to death our death. This is what the Lord did, this the gift he granted to us. The mighty one was brought low, the lowly one was slain, and after he was slain, he rose again and was exalted. For he did not intend to leave us dead in hell, but to exalt in himself at the resurrection of the dead those whom he had already exalted and made just by the faith and praise they gave him. Yes, he gave us the path of humility. If we keep to it we shall confess our belief in the Lord and have good reason to sing: We shall praise you, God, we shall praise you and call upon your name.

Jesus: Divinity, Humanity and Mission – Lesson and Discussion

The first four ecumenical councils of the Church answers the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?"

Nicaea I (325) – Condemned Arianism. It defined the Son of God as consubstantial with the Father, formulated in the Nicene Creed which we profess at Mass. Arianism says that there are not three persons of the Holy Trinity, but that there is only one person, God. It therefore states that Jesus was not a divine person, but was created by the Father. Jesus, therefore according to Arianism, was only human and not divine. Does anyone still believe that Jesus is human but not divine today? This is still believed by Jews, Muslims, Jehovah Witness, Mormons and others.

Constantinople I (381) – Condemned the Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It confirmed and extended the Nicene Creed. Macedonians attacked the divinity of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The council explained that Jesus gave His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to the world. Christ is divine; therefore the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son is also divine.

Ephesus (431) – Condemned Nestorianism, which held that there were two distinct persons in the Incarnate Christ, a human and divine. It defended the right of Mary to be called the Mother of God. We believe that Jesus is one person, not two persons. He is one person, with two natures. Mary is not the mother of two persons, but rather one person. She is the Mother of Jesus and since Jesus is God, she is the Mother of God. She is called the Theotokos, the God-Bearer.

Chalcedon (451) – Condemned Monophysitism or Eutychianism by defining that Christ had two distinct natures, and was therefore true God and true man. How powerful and real is the person of Jesus Christ that it took 418 years after His death to figure Him out! People debated, fought and even were willing to die, to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" The Church founded on Christ and the Apostles always knew and believed who Christ was, and it was through Her councils that She confirmed the person and nature of Christ to the world.

The question of Jesus's humanity and divinity was already being asked and the teaching of the Apostles was already being challenged. Saint John's Gospel, which was written by Saint John between 90-100 AD, in the first chapter clearly states the teachings of the Apostolic Church on this matter.