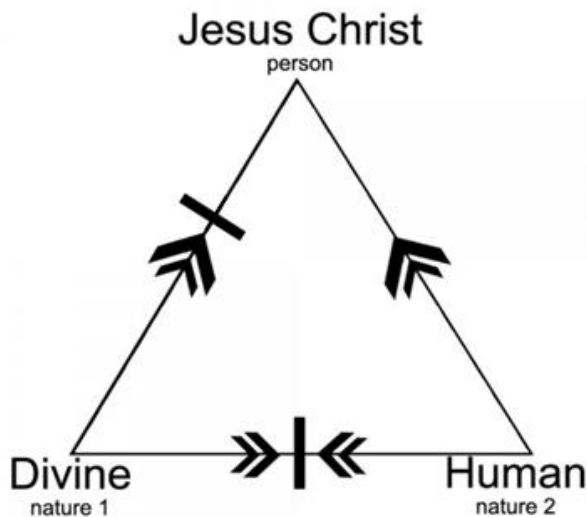




Can a person be two contradictory things at the same time?

Can you give 3 reasons or examples which support the idea that you can?

Can you give 3 reasons or examples which support the idea that you cannot?



The major branches of Christianity have long taught that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine (God) at the same time. He has, in a way, a dual nature. This does not mean that he was half-god-half-man, or sometimes God and sometimes man, he was always fully one and the other at the same time.

KEY TERM: 'hypostatic union'

The term hypostatic union refers to the fact that Jesus was one person but had two complete natures: he was both fully God and fully human.

Why is this belief important within Christian theology?

In order to fully represent humanity on the cross, Jesus had to be human, otherwise he would not represent us and our sins and his sacrifice would have been meaningless. But in order to offer himself as the redeeming sacrifice, Jesus also had to be fully God. Therefore, Christians believe that Jesus had two complete natures, in one person: he was both fully God and fully human. This is particularly important when we think about Jesus death – his sacrifice atoned for the sins of humanity, it bridged the gap between God and all men. Jesus had to be God in order to do this, but he also had to be human in order for it to mean anything.

Two natures, one person.

A story that illustrates this – Luke 4:3

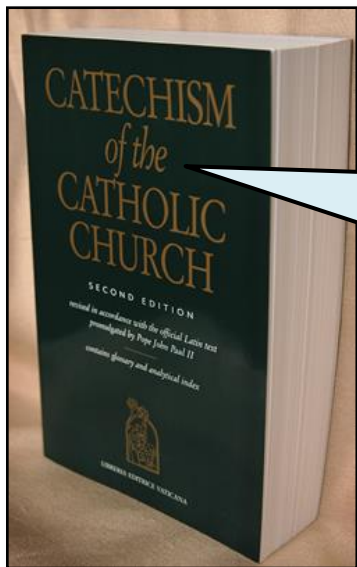
*In the wilderness, Satan tempted Jesus to turn a stone into bread. Was this Satan's diabolical plan – to simply cause Jesus to turn a stone into bread? Is it some eternal sin that man shall not turn stones into bread when hungry? After all, Christ did turn a few fish into thousands of fish and a few loaves of bread into enough to feed five thousand ... So there is obviously not a problem with feeding the hungry through miracles. **So why did Satan try to tempt Christ in this way?** Well, considering Christ's obligation to live according to his humanity, Satan was tempting him to access his divine nature for self-satisfaction. This would have immediately disqualified him from representing us since he would not have been living as a human lives. Jesus refuses because he knows he must represent us as a human.*



What does it mean to be human?

What does it mean to be divine?

The Catholic Church says ...



“The Incarnation of Jesus does not mean that Jesus is part God and part man, nor does it mean that he is a confused mixture of both the divine and the human. It means He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man.”

Being both human and divine is one of the great mysteries of the person of Jesus. It can be confusing to many Christians, but a helpful way to think about it is to think about the multiple ways in which you yourself exist: for example, you may be a sister and a daughter. These are 2 different things, with different responsibilities and different meanings, yet you are not less of a daughter when

you are a sister, or less of a sister when you are a daughter – to speak about yourself in that way would make little sense. You are fully one and the other simultaneously. Though this is not exactly what we mean when we talk about the hypostatic union of Jesus, it can help to get us closer to understanding it.

This dual nature was also something that Jesus himself hints at in the Gospels. He speaks about himself using an array of metaphors and similes, some of which seem to point to his human nature, and some of which point to his divine nature. **See if you can work out which are which:**

Human and Divine – The “I am” sayings of Jesus



In John’s Gospel, there are a number of occasions where Jesus describes himself by using a range of metaphors. These have come to be known as the ‘I am’ sayings.

- Take 2 different colours: with one colour, colour the sayings which show Jesus’ human nature. With the other colour, colour those which show Jesus’ divinity (Godly nature).
- Don’t forget to draw a key!

John 6: 35	
John 8: 12	
John 10: 9-10	
John 10: 14	
John 11: 25	
John 14: 6	
John 15: 1-2	

QUESTIONS:

- In your own words, explain what it means to say that Jesus is both human and divine. *Try to use the key term ‘hypostatic union’ if possible*
- In what way is Jesus’ dual-nature an important part of his sacrifice?
- How does the story of Jesus in the wilderness illustrate Jesus’ human and divine natures?
- Which of the *I am* sayings do you feel most adds to your understanding of Jesus’ nature? Why?
- Would our understanding of Jesus’ hypostatic union affect the way in which we picture Jesus?

