

Really One of Us

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



Hebrews 4: 14-15 is one of the clearest statements the New Testament gives us about Jesus Christ and who He really is. It tells us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God "who passed through the heavens"—meaning that He is the eternal Son of the Father, who has His dwelling with the Father in the heavens.

Then Hebrews goes on to say that Jesus is not one who is "unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." Why is this so? Because He "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Christ couldn't have been "tempted as we are" unless He was fully human, which means that He was sometimes hungry, uncomfortable, cold, sad, exhausted, angry and upset, just as we are. Always maintaining His divinity, He still became one of us, a true human person.

Another reading shows how Jesus expressed His humanity to people around Him so that they could know it was authentic. In John 10: 9-16 Jesus compares Himself to the shepherd who is not an uncaring hired hand, but a real protector who will lay down His life for the sheep. He won't be frightened off by a wolf, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the predator.

Jesus' hearers, many of whom know the life of a shepherd well, comprehend what He is saying about Himself. He is telling them that He knows their life because He has come among them to share it.

Then Jesus says, "I know my own and my own know me." These words, like the verses from Hebrews, stress His true humanity. There is no way people could be Jesus' own, or know they are His own, except by recognizing Him as one of them. Yet those who are willing to understand Him fully know also that He is the Savior.

That is why in the verses that follow, when some accuse Him of being mad and having a demon, others retort, "These are not the sayings of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (10: 21).

The Church commemorates a saint who had to defend the teaching that Jesus Christ truly became a human being. The sixth-century Saint Eutychius, served for many peaceful years as Patriarch of Constantinople. But then a heresy with a very long name and a very large influence—aphthartodocetism—took hold strongly in the empire. The teaching was that Jesus Christ, because He was divine, had a body that did not feel human sensations such as hunger and thirst, or pain.

Saint Eutychius, along with others, argued that salvation means nothing if Jesus Christ's humanity was not real and complete. For standing up against the false teaching, which had attracted even the Emperor Justinian, Eutychius was exiled. But he stood firm in the

Church's teaching: Christ saved us by becoming one of us and overcoming our great enemy, death.

Kontakion - Tone 8

Let us all chant with faith and love, O people,
blessing the godly Eutychius as a great pastor and minister,
an all-wise teacher and expeller of heresies,
for he entreats the Lord on behalf of us all!