

I'd like to start the homily today with a probing question: What's the basis for your **belief** that Jesus is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, and is risen and present in our midst right now by the Power of his Spirit? (I realise that I'm presupposing that this is your belief, or at least that you're curious about it). Is your belief something you inherited? Is it something you've investigated and concluded to be true? Or is it grounded in a personal experience of Jesus' presence?

Whatever our belief is grounded in, there's an upward, **maturing** trajectory from believing something simply because we've been told it's true, to experiencing it for ourselves. Wherever we might find ourselves along that continuum, though, Jesus says that **belief** in Him is the **condition** for eternal life.

The original Greek behind "whoever **believes** in him" implies an ongoing decision to trust rather than one-time decision. Jesus isn't describing a moment; he's describing a relationship. In fact, just a few verses later at the end of the chapter, Jesus concludes his chat with Nicodemus by stating "*Whoever believes in the Son **has** eternal life.*" He uses the present tense - "**has**" - rather than future tense, therefore implying that eternal life is grounded in a relationship with Jesus in this life – **not just the next**. Jesus says this even **more** clearly in his prayer to God the Father in John 17 verse 3: "*And **this** is eternal life, that they may **know** you, and [me,] Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*"

There are many signs that eternal life is taking root in a person. Their prayer changes. Their hunger for Scripture grows. Their generosity

deepens. But two signs I want to focus on today are these: their worship changes, and their reverence for Jesus' name grows.

What was Moses' reaction to encountering the Lord on Mt Sinai in our first reading? He *“bowed down to the ground at once and worshipped.”* In the context of Mass, but also in our day-to-day lives, we're presented with opportunities to worship our Triune God. In the Mass, particularly, what we **all** do with our bodies matters. We're invited to sing and respond to the prayers fully, consciously and actively – not just singing “glory to God in the highest,” or “amen,” but **GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST** and a great **AMEN!** During the Mass we bow, genuflect, shake hands, sit, stand and even kneel if we're physically able for very good reasons because the different **postures** and **gestures** hopefully represent **something** of what's going in our hearts in those moments. For example, **“Glory to You, O Lord,”** as we cross our minds, lips and hearts at the start of the Gospel in prayer to experience Jesus' presence in all three. Friends, our worship is **not just** grounded in our attendance, but in bodily reverence for the true presence of Father, Son and Spirit.

Similarly, when a person's **belief** grows from simple assent and/or intellectualism into something personal, their reverence for God's name changes. In the Old Testament, God's name was unutterable – *“I am who I am,”* God says to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3. **Adonai**, the Hebrew word meaning **Lord**, is used 7 times in our short first reading to highlight the **dialogical** exchange between God and Moses. But it's not until the angel announces God's name to Joseph and Mary in Matthew and Luke's Gospel's respectively, that **we** can **invoke** God's name. *“You will conceive*

*and bear a son, and you are to call him **Jesus**, a name which means God saves.”*

I've preached on this before, but did you know that the name, Jesus, is the only name which contains the divine presence it signifies? It's right there in the primary teaching document of the Church, our catechism, article 2,666. “To pray, ‘Jesus,’ [it says], is to invoke Him and to call Him within us... [and so] whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loves us and who gave himself up for us.” That's why using His name in vain is sinful.

Friends, there's infinitely more **about** God than we will ever know, but we can come to **know** – not just **believe** – what God **reveals** to us. I encourage you to take stock of where you're at in your faith journey, and particularly the basis for what is **hopefully** your belief that Jesus was sent by God so that through Him, the world – not just me and you as individuals, but the world – might be saved.