

Faith

# Faith

In Chapter One we outlined the argument that, if reality as we experience and know it is really intelligible, there must exist a Being ('God') that provides the ultimate explanation for why things in fact exist. Without God nothing we know could exist. However, while those who pursue the logic of this argument can know that God exists, they cannot know God, for we have no unmediated experience of the Transcendent. How we think of God is a matter, not of knowledge, but of belief.

In its final introductory chapter, the Catechism looks at what we mean when we say 'I believe' (n. 142-184).

## Catechism 5. Faith and the Creed n. 142-184

- ‘By his revelation “the invisible God, from the n.142 fullness of his love addresses human beings as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and welcome them into his own company”(DV 2).

- Opening our minds and hearts to welcome God’s communication and loving invitation is what we mean by faith.

n.153

- ‘Faith is a gift of God ... we must have the grace of God to move and assist us; we must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind.’

- In the opening chapters we reflected at some length on how God reveals God's self to each and every person, and invites everyone to enjoy divine communion. Faith, then, is before all else, a God-given capacity offered to each person to receive and welcome God's self-revelation.

- We are not isolated individuals. God reveals himself through others. We have been reflecting on this in the previous two chapters. Christian revelation is handed on through Tradition, especially through the sacred Scriptures. In this sense, faith is a God-given capacity to receive, and welcome as true, matters that we have not personally investigated and established for ourselves on the evidence, but that we accept as true thanks to the teaching of those who have gone before us in faith, especially those who have the grace of authority to teach (the church's magisterium).

n.162

- ‘To live, grow, and persevere in faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be **“working through charity”**(Galatians 5:6), abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.’

n.166

- ‘No one can believe alone ... I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.’

n.169

- ‘The Christian community is our teacher in the faith.’
- **‘No one can have God as Father**  
n.181
- **who does not have the Church as Mother**’(Saint Cyprian de Unit 6).

- Whether we think of our response to God's self-communication and the invitation into communion that God gives to us directly and personally,
- or whether we think of our response to God's self-communication via the truths handed on to us in the Church,
- **faith involves welcoming this revelation.**
- It also involves a graced capacity to respond to God by savouring what we have received, reflecting upon it, integrating it into our lives, and living accordingly.
- The Psalmist speaks of 'savouring' God's self-communication when he invites us to '**taste and see the goodness of Yahweh**' (Psalm 34:8).

## The knowledge we receive through God's revelation

- 'I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power'(Ephesians 1:17-19)



The knowledge we receive through God's revelation

- John-Paul II (Catechesi Tradendae): 'The Spirit is ... promised to the Church and to each Christian as a Teacher within, who, in the secret of the conscience and the heart, makes us understand what we have heard but were not capable of grasping: **'Even now, the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful'**, said Saint Augustine in this regard, **'in accordance with each one's spiritual capacity. And the Holy Spirit sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him love what he already knows and desire what he has yet to know'** (Tract on the Gospel of John 97.1).

## This deeper knowledge affects the way we live

- ‘We have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be
  - filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom
  - and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord,
  - fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work
- 
- and as you grow in the knowledge of God’ (Colossians 1:9-10).
  - Welcoming God’s invitation into a love-communion obviously
- 
- affects our decisions.
- 
- To believe means to be committed to doing God’s will.
- 
- To be ‘full of faith’ we must be ‘faithful’.
  - We will return to the subject of conscience
- 
- and the moral imperatives of faith in later chapters.

**n. 154-159**

It is reasonable to accept something as true on the word of another.

- When the one we believe is trustworthy
- When he/she is knowledgeable in the area
- When there is an established link between the person and the assertion that we accept as true
- When what I choose to believe fits with what I know
- When the fruit of believing is good:  
I become more attentive, more thoughtful, more reflective,  
more truthful, more responsible, more loving  
(and see Galatians 5:22).

- When it comes to our faith as Christians, we have the guarantee of Jesus that he would be with the community forever, we have his promise that he would guide the Church through the gift of his Spirit, and we have two thousand years of saintly and learned people who have lived beautiful lives because of what they accepted and handed on as true.

- Of course, not everything taught within the Christian community is of equal importance. We have already spoken of the ‘hierarchy of truths’, and will examine in a later chapter what is taught in theology about the levels of authority in teaching that is proposed, and about levels of acceptance required if we are to be faithful.

- For the moment it is sufficient to say that our acceptance is required by our faith only when we are dealing with truth revealed by God. When it comes to other matters presented for our acceptance, humility and prudence may require that we accept them and act on them, but not faith.

1st edition (1994)

‘The Church’s Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes truths contained in divine Revelation **or having a necessary connection with them**, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith.’

2nd edition (1997)

‘The Church’s Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, **in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith**, truths contained in divine Revelation, **or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.**’

‘Do not seek to understand that you may believe. Seek, rather, to believe so that you may understand’(Augustine Sermon 118.1)

Loving needs to be in accord with reason, but it cannot be confined within the realms of logic. The experience of love always involves something of a leap in the dark, a going beyond the limits of reason and control. And love opens up whole areas of understanding that we were unaware of before we dared to love. It is the same with Christ-inspired love. Believing opens up undreamed of areas of understanding.



'I believe in order to understand. I understand the better to believe' (Augustine Sermon 43,7,9).

n. 159 'There can never be any discrepancy between faith and reason'.

‘The official magisterium draws together and teaches the shared Faith of the whole community. In this it must be faithful to Scripture and Tradition, be well informed by the research of scholars, and be listening to the sense of the faithful. Likewise, faithful Christians should trust their own discernment, be guided by the consensus of the magisterium, and appreciate the research of scholars. Similarly scripture scholars and theologians need to place their scholarship in dialogue with the *sensus fidelium* and be guided by the consensus taught by the magisterium.

Be-liev-ing is being-in-love

Believing in God is being in love (communion)  
with God

welcoming grace

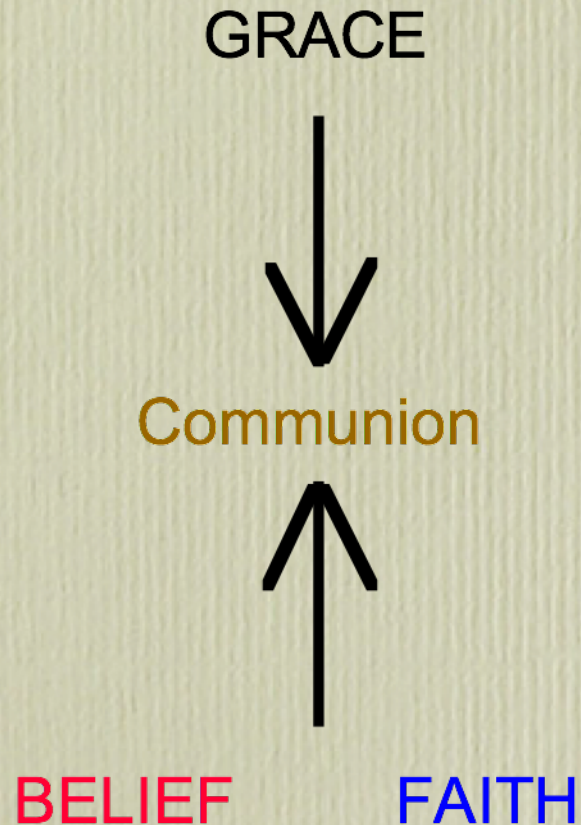
opening to God (mind, heart, will)

‘The only thing that counts is faith working  
through love.’(Galatians 5:6).

The knowledge that we receive through faith is a  
knowledge that only one who is in love can experience.

## Hosea 2:20

‘I will betroth you to myself forever.  
Yes, I will betroth you to myself  
in **covenant love** and **faithfulness**.’



‘The only thing that counts is  
**FAITH** working through **LOVE**.’

- A key insight into Christian faith is that it is not a faith modelled on the faith of Jesus. We are not asked to imitate Jesus as it were from the outside. He did not say 'I am a vine, and I want you to be a vine like me.' He said: 'I am the vine. You are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15:5).
- We are not copying Jesus. We are called to be our unique selves, and Jesus offers us a share in his love to make this possible in the most beautiful way. Included in this is the gift of his faith, poured into our hearts by his Holy Spirit. Paul puts this well: 'It is no longer I who live. Christ lives in me. And the life I now live is by the faith of the Son of God who loves me and gives himself for me' (Galatians 2:20).

## Catechism 5. Faith and the Creed

- The Letter to the Hebrews (12:2) speaks of Jesus as **‘the champion and perfecter of our faith’** (quoted Catechism n.147).
- Through his gift to us of the Spirit of love that binds him in communion with God, Jesus offer us a share in his faith, and invites us to **‘believe in God and believe in me’** (John 14:1; quoted Catechism n.151).
- To believe is to have **‘the mind of Christ’** (1Corinthians 2:16).
- Paul prays for the Christians in Philippi: **‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus’** (Philippians 2:5).
- To have Jesus’ mind is to love with his love: **‘Love one another as I have loved you’** (John 15:12).

## Catechism 5. Faith and the Creed

n. 148-149 Mary, the perfect disciple

‘I am the handmaiden of the Lord.

Let it be done to me as you have said’ (Luke 1:37).

‘Blessed is she who has believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord’ (Luke 1:45).

n. 165 ‘We must turn to the witnesses of faith ... to the Virgin Mary who, in her “pilgrimage of faith” (LG,58; Red Mater, 18) walked into the night of faith in sharing the darkness of her Son’s suffering and death’.

## Catechism 5. Faith and the Creed

Hymn for the feast of Joachim and Anne

Lord God we give you thanks for all your saints  
Who sought the trackless footprints of your feet,  
Who took into their own a hand unseen  
And heard a voice whose silence was complete.

Blest Trinity, may yours be endless praise  
For all who lived so humbly in your sight.  
Your holy ones who walked dark ways of faith  
Now share the joy of your unfailing light.



McAuley, James (1917-1976) : In a Late Hour

'Though all men should desert you my faith shall not grow less,  
but keep that single virtue of simple thankfulness.

Pursuit had closed around me, terrors had pressed me low;  
you sought me and you found me, and I will not let you go.

The hearts of men grow colder, the final things draw near.  
Forms vanish, kingdoms moulder, the antirealm is here

whose order is derangement: close-driven, yet alone,  
men reach the last estrangement, the sense of nature gone.

Though the stars run distracted, and from wounds deep rancours flow,  
while the mystery is enacted I will not let you go.'

**McAuley, James (1917-1976) : Faith (01/05/76)**

I know that faith is like a root  
That's tough, inert and old;  
Yet it can send up its green shoot  
And flower against the cold.

I know there is a grace that flows  
When all the springs run dry.  
It wells up to renew the rose  
And lift the cedars high.

- n. 170 'The believer's act of faith does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities which they express'(Thomas Aquinas Summa Theol II-II, 1, 2 ad 2).
- Words are important. The whole science of theology is about clarifying and making more precise the words in which we express our faith. But the point being made here is that it is not the words that we believe, it is the reality that is expressed (and partly veiled) by the words. Our faith is in God, who is always beyond that which reveals God, however sublime the medium.
- n. 175 'We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the vessel that contains it to be renewed'(Irenaeus AH 5, 20, 1).

## Section Two – The Profession of the Christian Faith (nn. 185 – 1065)

- The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds side by side (following pages).

St Ambrose

- n. 197 'The Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and an ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul.' (Expl. symb, 1)
- n. 194 'The Apostles' Creed is 'the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith' (Expl.symb, 7).

## **The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God  
the Father almighty  
creator of heaven and earth**

**I believe in Jesus Christ  
his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into Hades.**

## **The Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth  
of all that is, seen and unseen**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ  
the only Son of God  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light  
true God from true God,  
begotten not made, one in Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven.**

**By the power of the Holy Spirit  
he was born of the virgin Mary  
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate  
he suffered, died, and was buried.**

## **The Apostles' Creed**

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven and is seated  
at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again  
to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit**

**the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

## **The Nicene Creed**

**On the third day he rose again  
in fulfillment of the Scriptures.**

**He ascended into heaven and is seated  
at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord and Giver of life,**

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**With the Father and the Son**

**He is worshipped and glorified.**

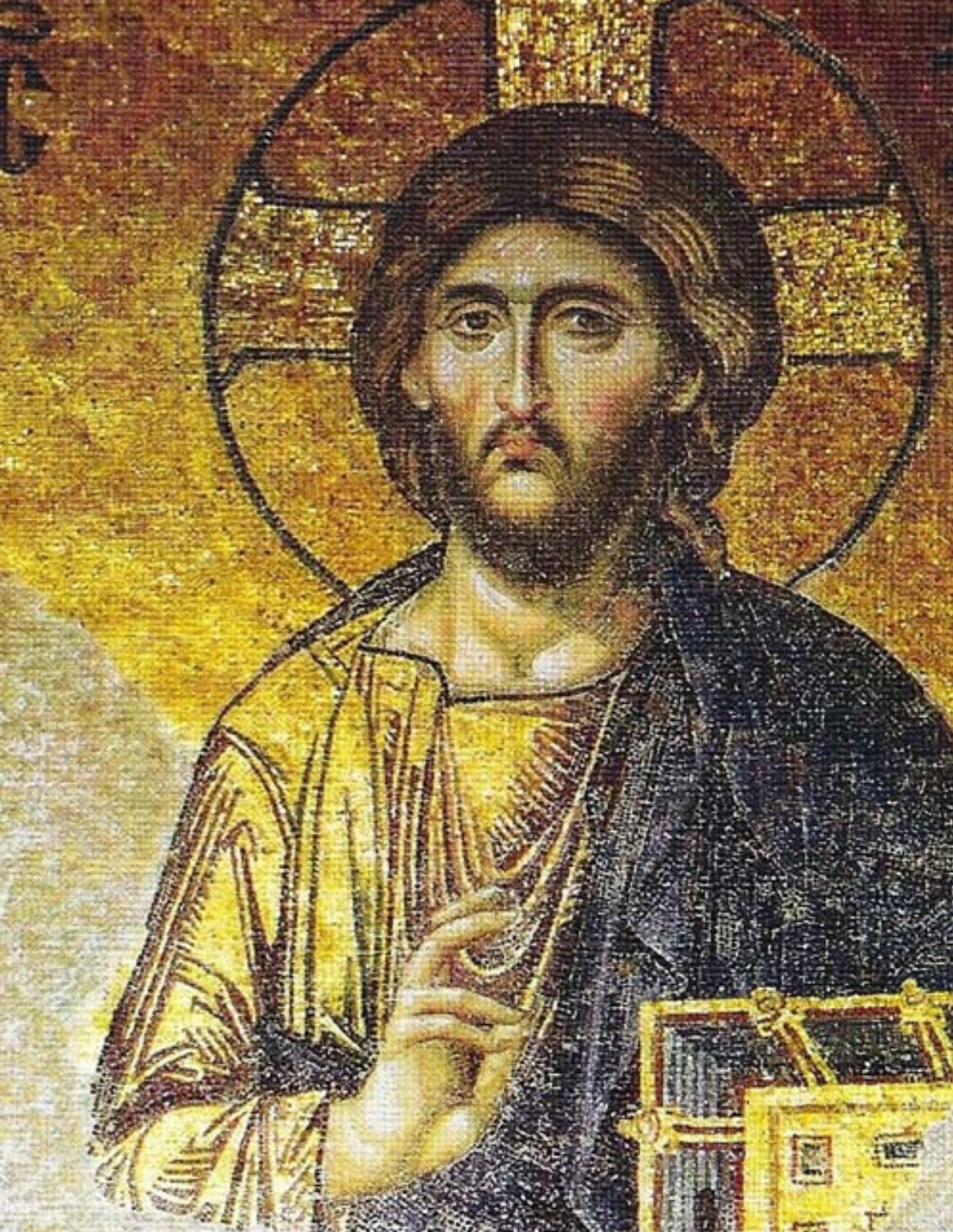
**He has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.**

**Amen.**



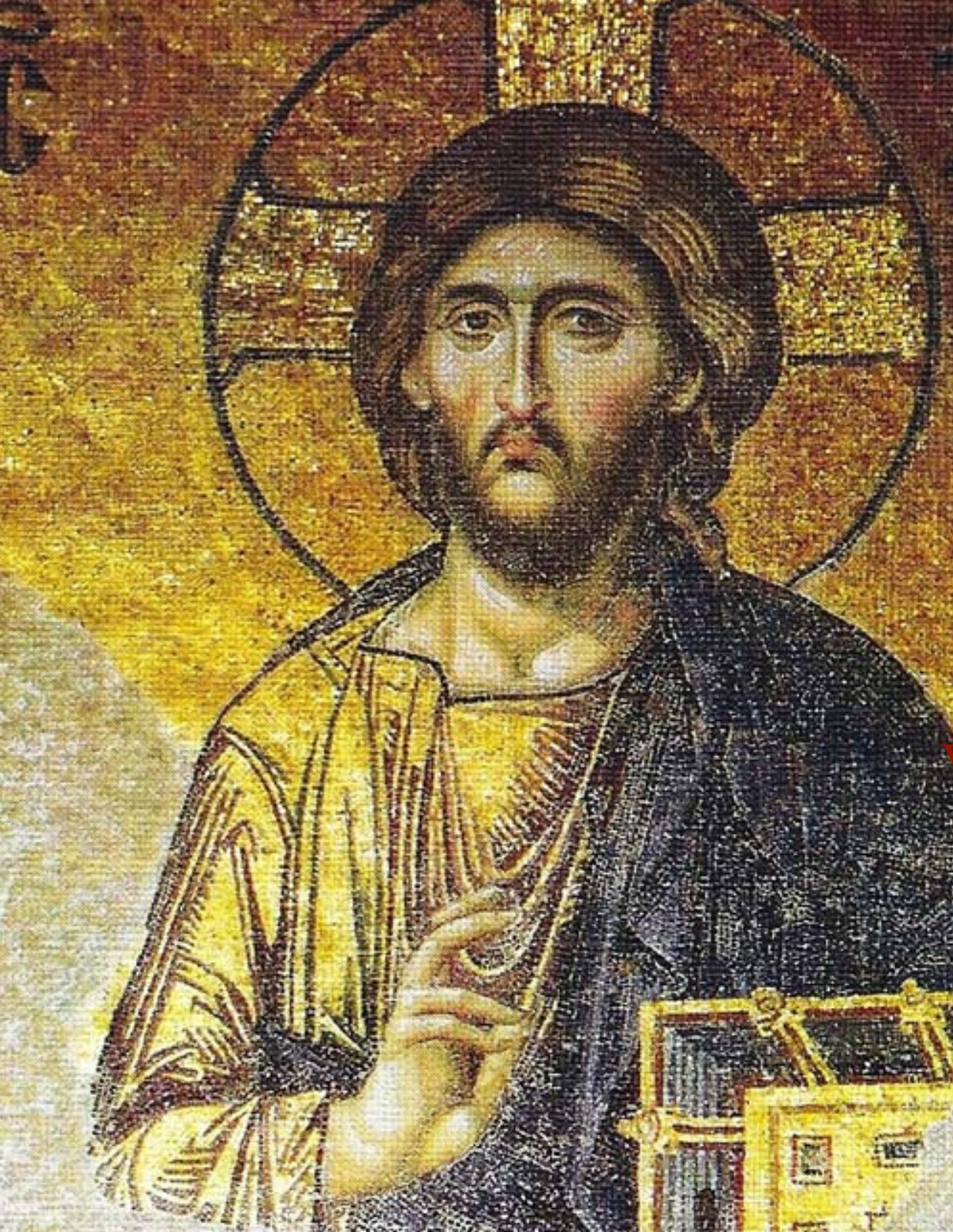
## Without seeing You

Words and Music: David Haas

© 1993, GIA Publications.

Reprinted with permission  
under One License A-642681.

All rights reserved.



Without seeing You  
we love You.

Without touching You  
we embrace.

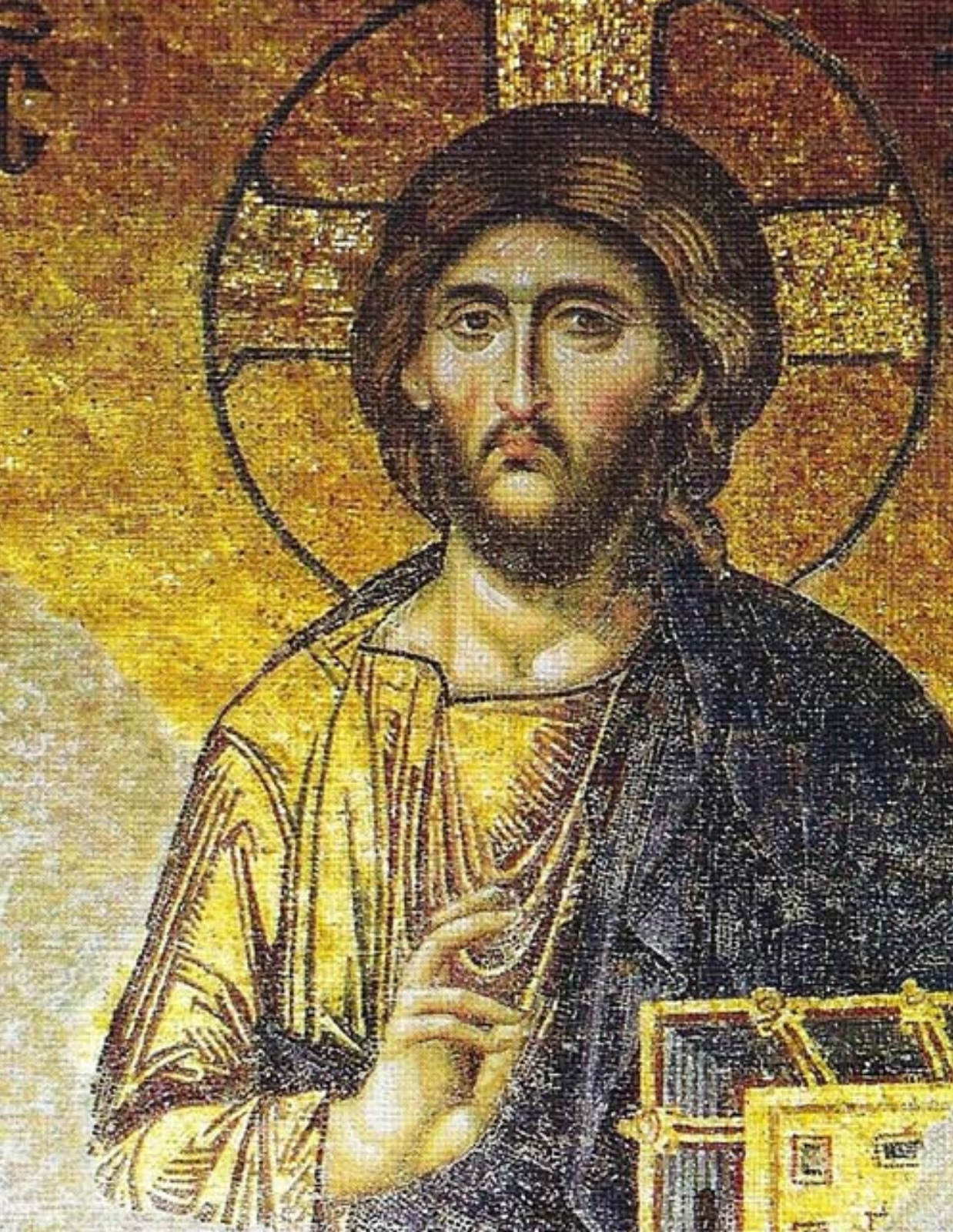
Without knowing You  
we follow.

Without seeing You  
we believe.

We return to You deep within,  
leave the past to the dust.

Turn to you  
with tears and fasting,  
You are ready to forgive.





Without seeing You  
we love You.

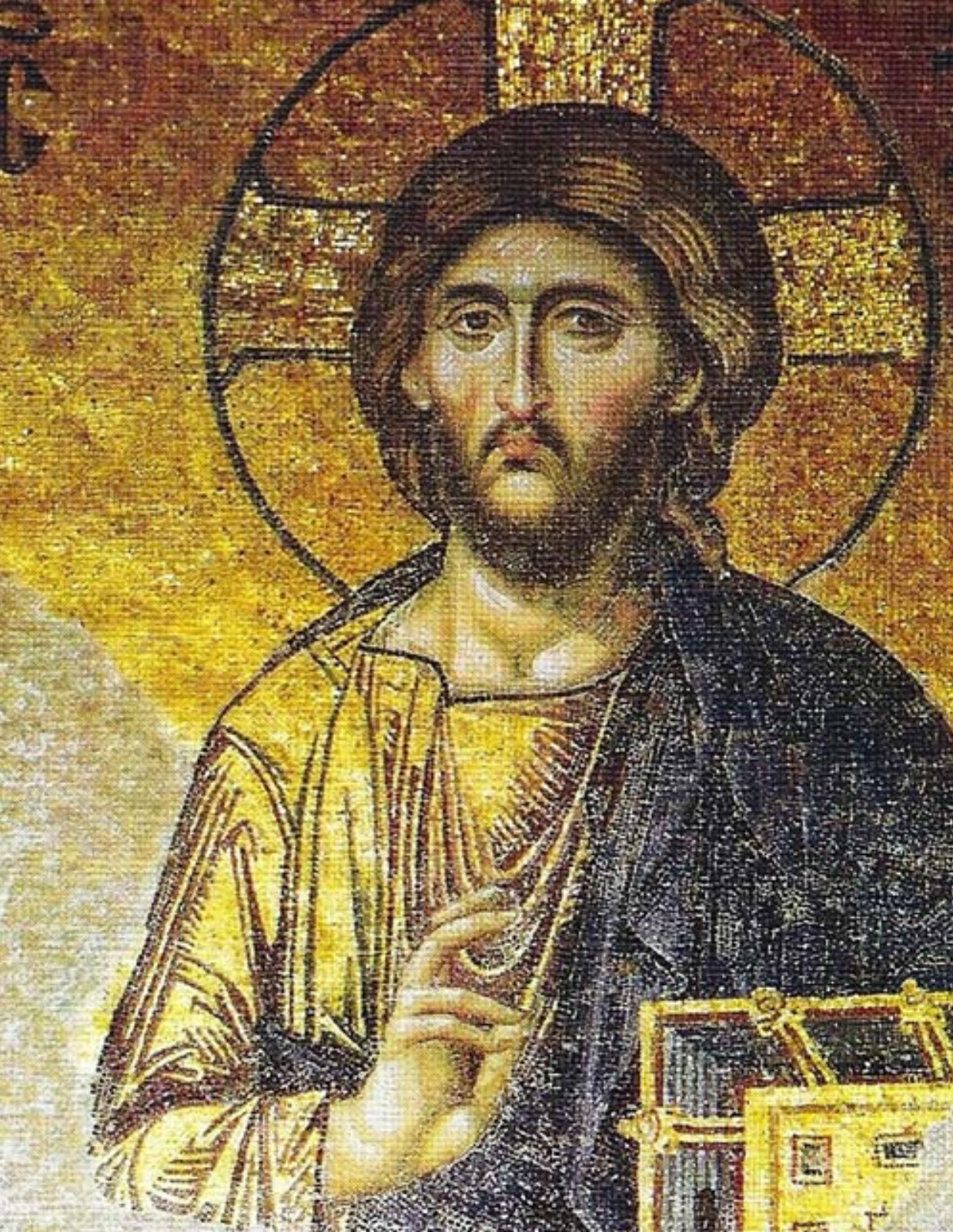
Without touching You  
we embrace.

Without knowing You  
we follow.

Without seeing You  
we believe.

The sparrow will find  
a home near to You, O God.

How happy we who  
dwell with You,  
forever in Your house.



Without seeing You  
we love You.

Without touching You  
we embrace.

Without knowing You  
we follow.

Without seeing You  
we believe.

For You are our shepherd  
there is nothing that we need.

In green pastures we will  
find our way,  
in waters of peace.