

(2:9) we find: *“But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels...”*. He became fully human in His incarnation, although He was always God as well. The passage which perhaps best encapsulates this is Philippians 2:5-7: *“..Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men..”* In other words, Jesus gave up the exercise of his divine capacity and humbled himself to the Father’s will during His time on earth. In his essence as God, Jesus could never be subservient to the Father. In his role on earth He voluntarily made Himself subservient to the Father.

Both the above explanations do, I suggest, have validity. In summary, Jesus’ words do not imply that the Father is superior to Him in His essence. They in no way detract from the truth that Jesus is God. As Philippians 2:10-11 says: *“...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

-Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: O sing a new song to the Lord; sing to the Lord, all the earth. In his presence are majesty and splendour, strength and honour in his holy place.

First Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3

Psalms 26: Response: The Lord is my light and my help.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Jesus proclaimed the Good news of the kingdom, and cured all kinds of sickness among the people. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 4: 12-23

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Look toward the Lord and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed.



Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: John 14:28 The Father is Greater than I? In this verse of St John’s Gospel, Jesus says: *“... If*

you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.” How is this last phrase compatible with Jesus Himself being God? The words have been consistently relied on by heretics who denied Jesus’ deity, from the early Arians to the Socinians in the 16th century. Yet if the verse is construed as denying the Godhead of Jesus it is inconsistent with other verses in the Gospels. Perhaps this is shown most powerfully by St John when he records Jesus as saying (17:5): *“Father, glorify me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made”*. This illustrates (a) that Jesus had the Glory of God and (b) that He had it from before the creation of the world.

Potential explanations of the words *“the Father is greater than I”* are:

1. In the order of the Trinity the first person is God the Father and Jesus is the second person. This interpretation has support from many of the saints of the early church. St Athanasius (297-373) in his ‘Orations against the Arians’ wrote: *“And hence it is that the Son too says not, ‘My Father is better than I ...’ lest we should conceive Him to be foreign to His Nature, but ‘greater,’ not indeed in greatness, nor in time, but because of His generation from the Father Himself, nay, in saying ‘greater’ He again shows that He is proper to His essence.”* Dr MacKnight, the U.S. evangelical biblical scholar reflects Athanasius when stating that Jesus’ words *“afford a strong argument for the proper divinity of our Lord. For had he been a mere man, or even a mere creature of the highest order, the comparison would have been foolish and impertinent.”* Of a similar opinion to St Athanasius are St Gregory the Theologian, St Basil the Great, St John Chrysostom and St Augustine of Hippo – to name but a few.

2. Jesus was referring to the Father being greater than Jesus in His human state, the form He had assumed while on earth. In the Letter to the Hebrews