

PARISHES OF
ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH
AND
SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW
WEEKLY REFLECTION

Sunday 8th February 2026 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Err.... How can Jesus have said that? (3)

An enigmatic statement by Jesus appears in Mark 13:32. Talking of the last days He says: *"But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"*. This apparent lack of omniscience by Jesus can be compared with an apparent lack of omnipotence in Matthew 20:23 where James and John ask for places in Heaven and He says: *"...to sit at my right hand and my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father"*.

Yet Jesus is God and God is omniscient and omnipotent. What, then, is the explanation of these two statements?

The answer is to be found in Jesus' dual being. As true God Jesus was omniscient and omnipotent; as true man He was neither. A key passage is Philippians 2:6-8: *"...Christ Jesus....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"*. Jesus abdicated his rights to manifest the full nature of His divinity so as to come among mankind as a man and servant. Fully understanding this is difficult, but it is only difficult because the doctrine of the duality of Jesus, like the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, something beyond our human understanding.

That Jesus as man could not have omniscience, omnipotence etc. is apparent when we consider that He was subject to human development and needs – and indeed temptations. He grew from babyhood. From the age of 12 it is recorded that: *"Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man"* (Luke 2:52). He ate and drank; ultimately He died on the cross. In all these ways He was true man. His divinity was in abeyance. A clear statement of Jesus' humanity is in Hebrews: 4:15 where it is said that Jesus is someone who *"...in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning.."*

Of course, Jesus had supernatural powers while He was on earth as man. He could work miracles and, though tempted, He could not sin. One commentator, using contemporary language, says that the fact that Jesus as man was not omniscient and omnipotent does not *"..mean that Jesus was ever not-God. It is more like part of His deity was in sleep mode."*

A detailed juxtaposition of scripture is used by St Augustine in *De Trinitate* to convey the duality of Jesus' nature. The whole passage merits contemplation. This is a small extract:

"...In the form of God, all things were made by him (John 1:3); in the form of a servant, he himself was made of woman, made under the law (Galatians 4:4). In the form of God, he and the Father are one (John 10:30); in the form of a servant, he did not come to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him (John 6:38)...."

Stephen S.