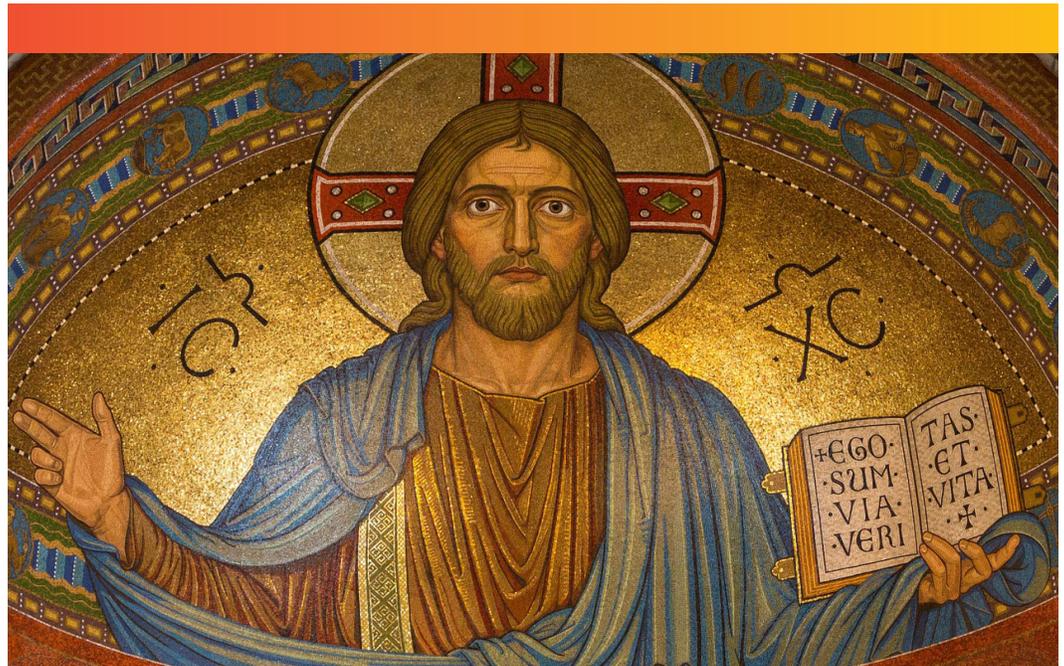




"Sir, give me this water that
I may not be thirsty!"
(John 4:15)



Encounter with Christ

God is a God of communion, of eternal relationship and encounter. The Son encounters the Father, and the Father encounters the Son in the depths of Love. This mutual encounter, marked by complete self giving, is so powerful that another Person, the Holy Spirit, the Love between the Father and the Son, eternally proceeds.

Since human beings are made in the image and likeness of a God who is eternal relationship, we were created for relationship and encounter. There is a desire to know and be known by another, and to love and be loved. At the deepest level of our being, we hunger for relationship--particularly with God. St. Augustine famously wrote: "Our hearts are restless until they can find rest in you." (*Confessions*, I)

Separated from our Creator by our First Parents' disobedience and our own subsequent sin, God sent His son in search of us, calling us back to the Father's love. Like the woman at the well (John 4:4-42), an encounter with Jesus can set us on a surprising journey of faith--one that can reveal to us our identity, our purpose, and our destiny.

Take some time and reflect on your own life. Has it been shaped or touched by encounters with God? In what ways have these encounters changed or affected you? Reflect on the questions to the right with your small group.

- Consider the truth that God, as Trinity, is eternal relationship, and that since you were made in God's image, you were created with a hunger to love and to be loved. What are some of the ways that you have sought to fill that hunger in your life?
- Do you find it difficult to believe that the Lord desires to spend time with you? Why or why not?
- Have there been moments of encounter with God in your life? What were they and how did they affect you? How have you changed as a result?
- How would you characterize your relationship with God (in other words, if a friend asked you to describe what it's like to be in a relationship with God, how would you respond)?
- If you encountered Jesus standing right in front of you in the midst of your day, what would you ask of Him?
- Is it difficult for you to receive the love that God has for you? Why or why not? What are some of the obstacles that you have in your life to remaining open to that encounter?