

**Mystery vs. Understanding**      Second Week of Christmas      Friday, January 8, 2016  
8:15 AM      **1 Jn 5:5-13;**      Lk 5:12-16      (What we really worship, if you ever read the prayers of the Mass carefully, you will realize what we are worshipping is a mystery, which our doctrines and our dogmas and our teachings simply point toward, but never completely unfold.)

**“Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.”**

**But what does it mean to possess the Son of God?** That’s a question we will never be able to answer ourselves, completely. Who does and who doesn’t possess the Son is not a judgment human beings can make; it’s a judgment God can make. **Only God knows who has accepted him or not.**

But we might reflect on a controversy that is in the air these days, especially in Wheaton where the Wheaton College has dismissed one of their professors for making the statement that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Well, do we or don’t we? Well, it depends what you mean by worship. St. Thomas Aquinas made the distinction between what he called the *id quod* and the *id quo*, “that which” and “that by which.” He said **when we worship or when we know something, the something we know or the something we worship is a reality. How we understand that reality, how we think about that reality, that’s something else again.** That’s the “by which,” the *id quo*. So **when we talk about beliefs**, what are we talking about? **We are really talking about our understandings.** We are talking about our concepts. We are talking about our minds. **We are not talking about the reality itself.**

Our minds do not grasp the reality of anything completely. It’s in fact quite remarkable that we can grasp anything. Does any other life form grasp anything? We don’t know. Animals do have some level of consciousness, but do they actually understand anything? **We do understand something, but not a great deal. And we can have relationships, and we have free will. So**

**the gospel does make sense to us because it opens this door to a relationship with God.**

**But in this theological way of thinking, what's really important is what we will, what we choose, whether we accept God.** It's not how we understand it; that's secondary. So Muslims understand God very differently from Christians, but Christians understand God very differently one from another. **But our understandings are not what we are worshipping, or shouldn't be.** When we worship our understandings, that's self-serving and self-centered and actually prideful and actually dangerous. **If you ever read the prayers of the Mass carefully, you will realize what we are worshipping is a mystery, which our doctrines and our dogmas and our teachings simply point toward, but never completely unfold.**

**So there is only one God, so everybody who really worships God can only worship the one God because there aren't any others. But in the human mind we can fabricate an endless number of images of God.** That's why idolatry, which is the worship of images, was forbidden in Scripture. But usually the graven images of Scripture mean images made from wood or silver or gold, but **what about our own mental images?** Are they any better? If our mental images are what we worship, isn't that idolatry? That's the problem.