

**The Pre-incarnate Christ**    Fourth Week of Lent    Wednesday, March 9, 2016    8:15 AM  
Is 49:8-15;    **Jn 5:17-30**    (St. Frances of Rome)    (They did have a distinction even in  
ancient times between the God who came closely and intimately into human life and God the  
Most High who was somehow more transcendent.)

**“For this reason they tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God.”**

Now some people think that this teaching is something that was utterly new and therefore alien to the Jewish culture. That’s not exactly true. **In the Old Testament there was this image of a humanlike God who appeared from time to time, often called “Yahweh,”** but not always. And it is of him that Justin Martyr said he is **the pre-incarnate Christ. This figure was also called the Son of God the Most High. So they did have a distinction even in ancient times between the God who came closely and intimately into human life and God the Most High who was somehow more transcendent.** So this distinction existed. However, it is also true that **by the time of Christ this distinction had been more or less obliterated.**

**So we see here a resurrection of an old understanding of God,** not something new and different, but the resurrection of something ancient. God had been very close to people for centuries, and their stories indicate that. But then something happened, we don’t have it go into it now, but it has to do with how Israel dealt with their traumas, two of them in particular: **the loss of the northern kingdom and then the exile into Babylon.** These were traumatic experiences, and the general result was that **they pushed God away,** eliminating this idea of God being present to them, even in the Temple, according to certain schools of thought. God more or less remained in the heavens and not on earth and not among them. **And this distance was made up for by a very exaggerated emphasis on obedience to the Torah,** that the reverses Israel

suffered must have been from their own failures to live as God wanted, and therefore he was withdrawing. That's how they understood things.

**Jesus' whole message is, no, God is still on your side.** God is still among you. God has never abandoned you, **but you have to understand things newly**, in a new way, in a different way. You have to lay aside certain things. You have to change certain ways you think, certain ways you feel, certain things you think are true. You have to let go of that. And of course the result was some did, following Christ, others did not. This is always a choice. It's a present moment all the time. It never goes away. **We always have a choice to acknowledge that God is with us or push God back into heaven.**