

INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

# ROCK FOUNDATION

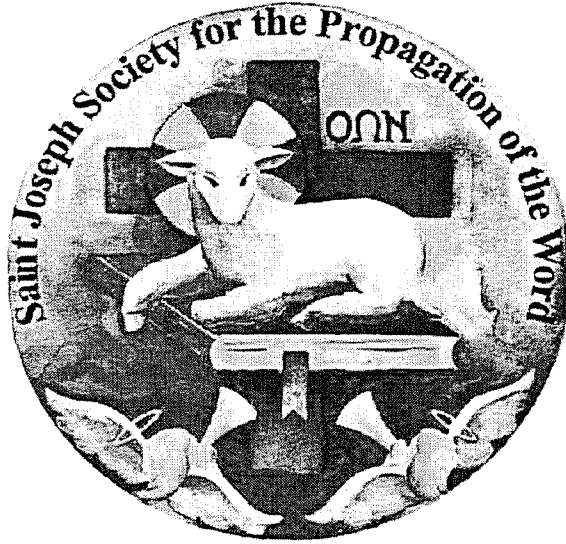
## REVISITED



*The Sermon on the Mount, Beato Angelico, Museum of San Marco, Florence*

# FUNDAMENTAL TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

# ROCK FOUNDATION REVISITED



## FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

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JAMES P. O'BRYAN, S.T.

St. Joseph Society for the Propagation of the Word  
24 Boulder View  
Irvine, CA 92683

[www.invitetodisipleship.org](http://www.invitetodisipleship.org)



**NIHIL OBSTAT: Michael Driscoll  
Censores Deputati**

**IMPRIMATUR : +William R. Johnson  
Bishop of Orange in California**

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**PRESERVATION OF FAITH**  
**ROCK FOUNDATION REVISITED**  
**INSTRUCTIONS IN THE CATHOLIC FAITH**  
**“THE APOLOGETICS”**  
**REVISED EDITION**

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## ROCK FOUNDATION REVISITED

### CHAPTER 1

#### ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD

Some years ago, a Catholic lady proudly displayed to a priest friend the family Bible that rested for fifty-four years on the parlor table. On opening the Sacred Scripture, the priest made a surprising discovery. The front piece of the Bible was a picture of coarse-looking Catholic monks dancing gleefully around a pile of burning Bibles. The family treasure was a version of Scripture published by a Bible society with little love for the family Church. The priest showed his friend that the Books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I and II Maccabees, and sections of Esther (10:4-16, 24) and Daniel (3:24-90; 13,14) were missing from the Old Testament. This was not a Catholic Bible, for there are seventy-three books in the Bible.

Apparently, in fifty-four years, no one had opened the book. Lives are changed because people “take and read” this Book. Untold graces of inspiration are lost to countless souls because the Book, unopened, collected the family dust! To neglect the study of the Bible is to neglect one’s personal sanctification. This is God’s story! To be ignorant of Sacred Scripture is to be ignorant of God, His Divine Son, and the Holy Spirit. Love is born out of knowledge. For the love of God we should read and study diligently the Sacred Scriptures!

St. Paul writes to Timothy: *“All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching--for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work” (2Tim.3:16-17).* Here the purpose of the study of the Bible is made plain--to make the Christian a perfect child of God.

The Catholic Church agrees with St. Paul that *“all Scripture, inspired of God, is useful.”* It is precisely for this reason that she has labored through the centuries to preserve *all* the inspired Scriptures of God. The Church has never admitted that the inspiration of a book can be judged by its effect upon the mind and heart of its reader. Inspiration of the book is one thing--the power to inspire the reader, another. The latter depends upon the disposition of the



reader at the time of reading the Scriptures. St. Jerome taught that to read the Scriptures without the grace of the Holy Spirit is like throwing stones across a frozen pond.

The word “inspiration” comes from the Latin word *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe into.” By inspiration, we mean a supernatural power by which God so moved and stirred the sacred writers to write that they wrote all and only that which God inspired them to write, and that they conceived this in a correct way and recorded it accurately. Since Jesus commanded His Church to teach all revealed truth, it has been the Church’s obligation to acknowledge, to preserve, and to proclaim all the inspired Scriptures.

The inspired Scriptures were created over a long period of history—from the time of Moses to the Apostolic era of the Christian Church. We read in Exodus that God commanded Moses to write: “*Write this down in a document as something to be remembered*”(Ex.17:14a). The sacredness of these written words Moses demonstrated by the command: “*Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, your God, that there it may be a witness against you*” (Dt.31:26). Inspiration did not cease with Moses but was to continue through the coming ages. His successors in the leadership of Israel added to his work. We read in Joshua: “*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem, which he recorded in the book of the law of God*” (Jos.24:25-26a). In the Book of Samuel we read: “*Samuel next explained to the people the law of royalty and wrote it in a book, which he placed in the presence of the Lord*” (1Sm.10:25). By the time of the writing of Daniel (9:2), some sort of recognized collection of inspired writings existed among the Jews, as the author refers to “*the books.*” By the time of Jesus, the inspired Scriptures fell into the three divisions of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Jesus told His apostles: “. . . *everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled*”(Lk.24:44). Nowhere in these writings do we find either a description of the formation of the inspired Scriptures or a list of the inspired books. It is only through inference and use that we can deduce the books considered inspired by the Jews. We do know that at the time of Christ, the Sadducees accepted only the first five books as inspired, while the Pharisees accepted the Prophets also, and, no doubt, the Psalms.

Around the year 285 B.C., Jewish scholars living in Alexandria, Egypt, began a translation of the Sacred Scriptures of the Jews into Greek. This work ended around 100 B.C. It became known as the Greek Septuagint Bible. It contained within it all the books now declared to be inspired by the Catholic

Church. The Alexandrian Jews were in close contact with Jerusalem and there was apparently no conflict with them and Jerusalem over this collection of inspired Scriptures. This Septuagint Bible became the Bible of the early Christian Church. There are about 350 quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament--300 of these come from the Septuagint. This Bible, under Divine Providence, was a most powerful means in the conversion of the world to Christianity. Greek was the common language of the Empire. The apostles and their successors used this Bible to prove to the Jews outside of Palestine, and the God-fearing Gentiles who attended the synagogue, that Jesus was the Messiah. When we read in Acts about the people in Beroea, "*Each day they studied the scriptures to see whether these things were so,*" it would have been this Greek version of the Scriptures studied.

Many believe the Church's successful use of the Septuagint Bible encouraged the Jews to reject this Greek version of the Scriptures. There existed bitter animosity between the Christians and Jews during the latter part of the first century. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Pharisees, anxious to preserve all they could of the past, affirmed their list of sacred writings at the Synod of Jamnia around 90 A.D. The Pharisees established their own norm for sacred scriptures: 1. Conformity with the Law of Moses; 2. Antiquity--written no later than the time of Esdras; 3. Written in the Hebrew language; 4. Written in Palestine. They rejected as inspired: Wisdom and 2 Maccabees (they were written in Greek); Ecclesiasticus and 1 Maccabees (written after the time of Esdras); Baruch (written outside of Palestine); and the rest probably written in Aramaic--some in Palestine and others outside of it.

Whatever the decisions of the Pharisees at Jamnia, it would have had no influence upon the Church. The Church accepts the inspiration of the Old Testament on the testimony of Jesus Christ, and it accepted certain books to be inspired because the inspiration of these books was confirmed by apostolic tradition.

Jesus Christ confirmed, by his use and his teaching, the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. He taught: "*Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true*"(Mt.5:18). The Resurrected Jesus told His disciples: "*Recall those words I spoke to you when I was still with you: everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to the understanding of the Scriptures*"(Lk.24:44-45). Because of the testimony of

Jesus Christ, the Church believes the Old Testament to be inspired. The Church teaches:

*God, the inspirer and author of both testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New . . . . Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testament are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (II Vatican Council).*

Tradition confirms that the early Church accepted the books found in the Septuagint as inspired Scriptures. All of these books are found quoted in the works of the early Fathers of the Church. It was not until much later that some Christians, influenced by the Jews, called into question the inspiration of certain books. St. Jerome was one such person. Reaction against his view was very strong and probably initiated the first formal statement in the Church naming the inspired books of the Bible. The Council of Hippo in 393, and the Third and Fourth Council of Carthage in 397 and 418, declared as inspired the books now found in both the Old and New Testament Catholic Bible. This decision the Councils sent to Rome, seeking the approval and confirmation of Pope Innocent I. About this time, St. Exuperius, Bishop of Toulous, wrote to Innocent I a formal letter asking him which were the inspired books of the Bible. He replied in 405 A.D., reaffirming the list given at the Council of Hippo in 393 A.D. The Council of Florence, in 1441, issued a list of inspired Scriptures identical with that of the African Councils. In 1546, the Council of Trent, repeating the decision of Florence, formally decreed all the books now found in the Catholic Bible to be the complete list of the inspired Scriptures. From that time it became a matter of Catholic Faith to hold to the inspiration of all these Scriptures.

The Protestant Reformers chose to reject the decision of the Catholic Church in favor of the decision made by the Jewish Pharisees at the Council of Jamnia. For this reason, many of these books are found in many Bibles today. However, some editions have them in the back of the Bible listed as “doubtfully inspired.” As Catholics, we cannot accept such a decision. Luther, and some other German reformers also rejected Jude, Hebrews, James, and Revelation from the New Testament. Luther’s rejection of the Epistle of James for teaching that “*faith without works is dead*,” is well known. He referred to it as “an epistle of straw.” The Lutherans returned these works to the Bible in the 17th Century.

The enemies of the Catholic Church have often presented her unjustly as the enemy of the Bible. The history of truth denies this accusation. In truth, the Catholic Church appears in the world, in all humility, as the preserver and guardian of the Holy Scriptures. Through the Holy Spirit the Church has distinguished the weeds from the wheat and preserved, through the ages, the inspired Sacred Scriptures. She has not only preserved the Scriptures themselves, but has sought diligently to keep them from being mutilated by erroneous interpretations. The early Church demonstrated this protective attitude as we read in Peter's Epistle:

*Paul, our beloved brother, wrote you this in the spirit of wisdom that is his, dealing with these matters as he does in all his letters. There are certain passages in them hard to understand. The ignorant and the unstable distort them--just as they do the rest of Scripture--to their own ruin. You are forewarned, beloved brothers. Be on your guard lest you be led astray by the error of the wicked, and forfeit the security you enjoy (2Pt.3:15-17).*

St. Augustine noted: *"Heresies have not arisen except when the good Scriptures were not well understood, and what was not well understood in them was rashly and boldly asserted."*

There are sections of the Bible difficult to understand. The Bible cannot speak out when it is misunderstood, misinterpreted, or mutilated. It is through the teaching authority of the Church that the Holy Spirit guards His inspired truth. Many deny this living voice of authority in the name of the right of private interpretation of the Scriptures. Rather than build their religious lives upon a rock foundation, they prefer the sifting sands of private judgment. The Church is not opposed to personal inspiration but is against personal misinterpretation of God's Word.

In the 4th Century, St. Athanasius, speaking about the interpretation of a Scripture wrote:

*Here it is necessary--as indeed it is right and necessary in all Divine Scripture--to note the time at which the Apostle wrote, and the person about whom, and the point under consideration, lest the reader should, from ignorance, miss any of these or any like particular and thus be wide of the sense intended.*

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote:

*The interpreter of Sacred Scriptures, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words . . . . Since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly brought to light . . . . And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scriptures, so that God and man may talk together, for we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine sayings.*

The Council Fathers ended their document with this holy hope: “*Through the reading and study of the sacred books, let the word of the Lord run and be glorified*” (2Thes.3:1), and let the treasure of revelation entrusted to the Church increasingly fill the hearts of men. Just as the life of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration of God’s word which lasts forever.”

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### **LESSON ONE**

#### **ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD**

- 1. What is meant by the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures?**
- 2. What Books not found in the Old Testament of the Jews and the Protestants are held to be inspired by the Catholic Church?**
- 3. What is the Septuagint Bible?**
- 4. What Bible did the early Church use?**
- 5. Why did the Catholic Church accept the Books of the Septuagint Bible as inspired?**
- 6. How did the present Bible of the Jews come to be?**
- 7. When did the Catholic Church first declare the Bible it holds today as inspired?**
- 8. Why does the Protestant version of the Bible differ from the Catholic version of the Bible?**
- 9. How does the Church instruct us to interpret the Scriptures?**
- 10. According to St. Augustine, how do heresies come to be in the Christian Community?**

**If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.**

## CHAPTER 2

### THE VOICE OF CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY

Many people today speak of the Bible as the authority for Christians. Some demonstrate a hostile spirit to any observances, teachings, or rituals not rooted in a written verse of the Scriptures, with their constant refrain being, “Where is *that* in the Bible?” Unfortunately, many Catholics are slipping into this attitude without realizing that it implies an erroneous doctrine. The Catholic Church holds the Bible in the highest esteem. The Church has guarded and preserved the Bible through the ages. The Church knows the Bible to be a major *source* for authoritative truth, but not the *voice* of authority in the Christian Community. Authority itself must be something other than the Scriptures.

Take for an example, the observance of Sunday as the Lord’s Day. The Scriptures confirm that the Lord’s Day is Saturday. Some authority outside of the Scriptures changed the Lord’s Day from Saturday to Sunday for most Christians. Another example is the books of the Bible. In our Old Testament you will find the Books of Wisdom, Tobit, Judith, Sirach, and I and II Maccabees, but you will not find these books in the standard King James Version of the Old Testament. Two things these books have in common are that they were originally written in Greek, and that the Protestant Church holds them not to be inspired Scripture. There is nothing in the Bible that says these books should not be there--or, for that matter, that they should be there. For over sixteen hundred years these books were considered inspired by the Christian Community. They were removed from the Protestant publications of the Scriptures. There is nothing in the Old Testament that says God only inspired in Hebrew. Nothing is said one way or the other about what must be the language of the Scriptures. Yet, these books were removed because they had been produced in Greek rather than Hebrew. One authority put them in the Bible and another authority took them out. St. Paul teaches that “*all scripture is inspired of God,*” but inspiration only refers to the original Hebrew and Greek versions of the Scriptures. How can we know then, that our English translations are valid translations of those inspired works? In other words, how do we know that what we read in English is what was really expressed in the original language of the Scriptures? We have to look for an

authority outside of the Bible to confirm the truth of this matter. What we see in actual practice is that both Catholics and Protestants admit to a religious authority outside of the Bible. For a thing to be Christian and true, it does not have to be in the Bible.

The question now arises, "What is the proper authority in the Christian Community if it is not the Scriptures?" Without a doubt, *the* authority is Jesus Christ. It was around His Person and teachings that the Church came into existence. The life of Jesus terminated on this earth around 33 A.D., but the Church continued in existence. Jesus appointed a visible successor to take his place in the Church--to be the symbol of unity and to be a principle for preserving the unity of the Church. The early Church acknowledged this successor of Jesus to be the Apostle Simon Peter. They knew of Jesus' words to Peter:

*Blest are you, Simon son of Jonah! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you, you are "Rock," and on this rock I will build my church and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt.16:17-19).*

*Simon, Simon! Remember that Satan has asked for you, to sift you all like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers (Luke 22:31-32).*

*". . . Simon, son of John, do you love me?" . . . "Lord, you know everything. You know well that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (Jn.21:16-17).*

Simon was part of a special group called the Twelve that Jesus set apart, trained, and authorized to continue His Church on earth. They were the twelve foundation stones of the Church.

Of necessity, the successor of Jesus must ensure that the teachings of Jesus be preserved and taught in their fullness. This the Church accomplished by preaching the Gospel. Only when it became apparent there would be a long delay before the Second Coming, and the early Gospel witnesses were dying, did the Church realize the importance of a written Gospel. The Church was in existence many years before the written Scriptures of the New Testament appeared.



If you could go in a time machine back to 50 A.D., in Jerusalem, you would find an active Christian Community, and you would find Simon Peter the visible leader of that Community, but you could not find anywhere the four Gospel accounts. They had yet to be written. If you said then, "Where is that in the Scriptures?" they would have presumed you meant the Old Testament. If you made it clear you meant something pertaining to the life and teachings of the Church, the Christians in 50 A.D. would have replied, "Oh that is a teaching in the Christian Community." If you asked, "How do you know it is true?", they would reply, "On the authority of the eye witnesses, the Twelve Apostles." You would have found a living teaching authority in the Christian Community.

These teachings of the Apostles were preserved in the memory of the Christian Community. In later years, some were written down and others were not, but they lived on in the memory of the Church. In St. John's Gospel we read: "*There are still many other things that Jesus did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them*" (Jn.21:25). These unwritten truths lived on in the living traditions of the Church. These truths, both written and unwritten, became the deposit of faith--the inspired and authoritative sources of all Christian teachings from which the teaching authorities, the successors of the Apostles, would draw.

The Church must always return to its authoritative sources--the written Scriptures and the oral traditions of the Apostles--for the roots of its teachings. These oral traditions of the Apostles can today be found recorded in the writings of such early Christian writers as Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, and Origen of Alexandria. They can be found living in the practices and teachings of the Catholic Church.

A true Catholic must recognize that the living teaching authority of Christ continues in the Church, in the Bishop of Rome, and in the bishops, the successors of the Apostles. The authority for what we believe is the Church. We believe because the Church teaches it. If we desire, we can trace the roots of these teachings back to their primitive and inspired sources, the teachings of the Apostles. We can have confidence in the teaching authority of the Church because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide and preserve the Church in truth: "*I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete--to be with you always: the Spirit of truth . . . the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will instruct you in everything, and remind you of*

*all that I told you” (Jn.14:16-17a,26).* Those whom Our Lord places in the Church to be his teachers and shepherds receive a special charism from the Holy Spirit to carry out their duty (Eph. 4:11).

A Catholic who really knows his faith, truly knows the very heart and essence of the written Scriptures, whether he or she can quote verses of Scripture or not. But, he also knows much more--his faith carries within itself the seeds and the flowering of the fullness of Christian revelation. Our faith is completely biblical, but it is more than biblical, because divine revelation was not confined solely to the written Scriptures. And that is in the Bible--John 21:25!

## LESSON TWO

### THE VOICE OF CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY

1. What does the Catholic Church hold to be the voice of authority in the Christian Church?
2. Who decided what books belonged in the Bible?
3. Who decided that the Christian Church would celebrate Sunday instead of the Sabbath?
4. What do these examples demonstrate about authority in the Church?
5. Why does the Church insist that the Scriptures cannot be the “voice” of authority in the Church?
6. What are the major sources of Christian teachings in the Catholic Church?
7. What is the difference between the written and the oral Gospel?
8. What does verse 25 in Chapter 21 of St. John’s Gospel teach us?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 3

### WHO DID JESUS THINK HE WAS?

The faith of the early Christian Church in Jesus Christ found biblical expression in Paul's letter to the Philippians: "*Though He was in the form of God, He did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men*" (Phil.2:6-7). And also in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . . The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we have seen His glory: The glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love*" (Jn.1:1,14.) The seeds of the doctrine of the Trinity were sown when John wrote, "*The Word was God.*" He did not write "*He was the God,*" thus identifying Him with the Father; nor did he say, "*The Word was a God,*" implying another god. The Word appears as an existing Divine Person, co-equal with the Father but distinct. There is little doubt that Paul infers the divinity of Jesus when he writes: "*The glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God,*" and he speaks of "*the glory of God in the face of Christ*" (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

The disciples came to a conscious awareness of the divinity of Jesus Christ after His death. The Resurrection from the dead was the ultimate work performed by Jesus, and it verified all His teachings and claims. Paul confirms that the Resurrection of Jesus "*was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve. After that He was seen by five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep. Next He was seen by James; then by all the apostles. Last of all He was seen by me*" (1Cor.15:5-8). This led Paul to write Titus: "*Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.*" The Greek construction here implies that Jesus Christ is both "*the great God and our Savior.*"

During His earthly life--before His death and resurrection--what kind of an image did Jesus project to others? How did He see Himself? What was His own self concept? We know as one internally conceives oneself, one externally manifests oneself. When a person feels inwardly devoid of talents and abilities, that person will manifest little, if any, talent or ability in his external actions. On the other hand, a person filled with self confidence projects this in words

and deeds. The four gospel accounts record certain words and deeds of Jesus. These words and deeds testify to Jesus' conscious awareness about Himself. Jesus saw His presence in the world as something kings and prophets longed to see: *"Blest are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you, many prophets and kings wished to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it"* (Lk.10:24). He expressly stated that His presence surpassed that of prophets and kings: *". . . You have a greater than Solomon here . . . you have a greater than Jonah here"*(Lk.11:31-32). Even though he was a descendant of David, he implies His lordship over David. Jesus asked the Pharisees:

*"What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"*  
*"David's," they answered. He said to them, "Then how is it that David under the Spirit's influence calls Him 'lord,' as he does: 'The Lord said to my lord, Sit at my right hand, until I humble your enemies beneath your feet?'"* (Mt.22:41-44).

In His relationship with His disciples He was their Teacher and Lord: *"You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Lord' and fittingly enough, for that is what I am."* (Jn.13:13). In His relationship to the angels, Jesus viewed them as His ministers and not as being superior to Himself. We read that when the devil left Him, *"angels came and waited on Him"* (Mt.4:11). He said that, on His request, His Father would send twelve legions of angels to His defense (Mt.26:53). When he comes in glory, Jesus tells us that the angels will accompany Him and he will send them forth to assemble the sinners and the just before Him (Mk.13:27).

In His relationship with others, Jesus demanded that they put faith in Him: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me"* (Jn.14:1). Jesus makes Himself the object and content of faith: *"He that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when He shall come in His glory and that of His Father and of His holy angels"* (Lk.9:26). *"Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me"* (Mt.11:6). He demands a love from His followers that only God has the right to demand: *"He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me"* (Mt.10:37). He demands that His disciples be willing to lose their lives for His sake (Matt. 10:39). The disciples are to pray in His name. *"Whatever you ask in My name I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son"* (Jn.14:13).

Jesus was conscious that he possessed extraordinary powers: *“Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth” (Mt.28:18)*. He claimed the divine power to forgive the sins of men (Mt.9:6). The Old Testament spoke of God as being the judge of the world (Ps.50:1-6). Zechariah speaks of the final judgment: *“The Lord, my God, shall come, and all His holy ones with Him” (Zec.14:5)*. Jesus appropriates to Himself the office of Judge of the World: *“The Son of Man will come with His Father’s glory accompanied by His angels. When He does, He will repay each man according to his conduct” (Mt.16:27)*. His judgment is final and will be executed immediately: *“And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting.”*

Jesus clearly and consciously proclaims a unique relationship with God. He experienced Himself as the Son of God and not in any adoptive or moral sense. He identifies Himself with the divine nature in a substantial way:

*“The Father and I are one” (Jn.10:30).*

*“If you really knew me, you would know my Father also” (Jn.14:7).*

*“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me, or else believe because of the works I do” (Jn.14:11).*

*“All that the Father has belongs to Me” (Jn.16:15).*

As the Father does, Jesus sees Himself a principle of everlasting life: *“Just as the Father possesses life in Himself, so has He granted it to the Son to have life in Himself” (Jn.5:26).*

We find the most sacred name of the Old Testament in the Book of Exodus:

*“But,” said Moses to God, “when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?” God replied, “I am who am.” Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: ‘I Am sent me to you’” (Ex.3:13-14).*

From these words came the name *“Yahweh,”* the holy name of God. In Exodus, God tells the Israelites: *“You will know I am--Yahweh.”* This

knowledge will be gained through what He does--by His works they will know Him.

When the authors of the Septuagint translated the Bible into Greek, "I am" became *ego eimi*. In the Septuagint Bible, *ego eimi* becomes a divine name. In Isaiah we read: "*Ego eimi (I Am), ego eimi (I Am), who blots out transgressions.*" Here *ego eimi* appears as a name applied to Yahweh. In Isaiah 52:6, we read: "*My people will know My name; in that day they will understand it is I who say 'I Am here.'*" Therefore *Ego eimi* becomes a divine name to be known in the day of the Lord.

In the Fourth Gospel, the words *ego eimi* appear time and time again on the lips of Jesus. Jesus says: "*When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I Am (Ego eimi)!*" (John 8:28). One of the most dramatic uses of this expression is found in the arrest of Jesus. Jesus meets the soldiers in the Garden of Olives and asks, "*Who is it you want? 'Jesus the Nazorean,' they replied. 'I am he (Ego eimi).'*" ...*As Jesus spoke those words, they retreated slightly and fell to the ground*" (Jn.18:3-6). Another time, Jesus said: "*Unless you come to believe I Am, you will surely die in your sins*" (Jn.8:24). When Jesus said to the Jews: "*Before Abraham ever came into existence, I Am,*" they took up stones to kill Him (Jn.8:58). John tells us: "*For this reason the Jews all the more sought after His life, because not only did He transgress the Sabbath, but also called God His own Father and made Himself equal to God*" (Jn.5:18). The Sanhedrin--the supreme religious body of the Jewish Nation--demanded through the high priest: "*I adjure thee by the living God that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.*" Under oath Jesus clearly and definitely answered, "*I Am!*" That He intended to proclaim His true divinity can be seen by the added words: "*And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven*" (Mk.14:62).

The words and deeds of Jesus testify that he consciously experienced Himself as "*the Messiah--the Son of the living God.*" Yet, in our reading of the Scriptures, we may at times feel Jesus' self-witness to be contradictory. On one occasion, he proclaims the Father to be greater than Himself, and on another, He speaks of Himself as being equal to the Father. These seemingly contradictory statements are easily understood when we realize in Jesus Christ we have *One Person* who expresses self through *Two Natures*--one divine and the other human.

We have many living beings in this world and some are persons. By “person,” we mean a rational being. Persons may be human, angelic, or divine. The person is the one who acts. A “nature” is that through which a being acts. The potential activities of a being are determined by the nature of the being. In actual practice, we distinguish between person and nature. If it happens that we hear a noise in the night, our first thought is: “What is it?” If the noise becomes spoken words, we know from the words the “what” and so we inquire, “Who is it?” We seek the identity of a person. The “what” is the nature and the “who” is the person.

When Jesus asked, “*Who do men say the Son of Man is,*” He was inquiring about the nature of the Son of Man. The actions of Jesus had led people to see Him as a prophet--a holy human being. The actions of Jesus led His disciples to a deeper conclusion: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

One’s activities help form one’s conscious awareness of self. When Jesus expressed Himself through His human nature, he would consciously be aware of His human limitations and rightly could say: “*The Father is greater than I*” (Jn.14:28). On the other hand, when experiencing His divine nature, he could rightly confirm: “*The Father and I are one*” (Jn.10:30). “*All that the Father has belongs to me*” (Jn.16:15).

People will come to your door and quote John 14:28 (and other things) trying to disprove the divinity of Jesus--trying to destroy your true ancient faith in the Lord. You need to clearly understand the problem proposed by the Word becoming Flesh--One Person in Two Natures--in order to safeguard your own faith and to enlighten in love those in error. “*Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully*” (1Pt.3:15).



## LESSON THREE

### WHO DID JESUS THINK HE WAS?

1. What does St. Paul teach about Jesus in Philippians 2:6-7?
2. What does St. John teach about Jesus in the Prologue to his Gospel?
3. When did the Apostles come to their full realization about Jesus?
4. According to St. Paul, who in the early Church were witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus?
5. What kind of image did Jesus have of Himself?
6. What extraordinary powers did Jesus claim for Himself?
7. What kind of response did Jesus demand from His disciples?
8. How did Jesus describe His relationship with the Father?
9. What did Jesus imply when He referred to Himself as "*I Am*"?
10. What do you understand by the terms "person" and "nature"?
11. How would you explain such statements by Jesus that the Father was greater than Himself?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 4

### WHO IS JESUS OF NAZARETH?

One day as Jesus walked with his disciples through the territory of Caesarea Philippi, He inquired of them, *“Who do men say that the Son of Man is?”* This question He followed with another: *“And you, who do you say that I am?”* The answers given by men and the answer given by the disciples would forever stand in contrast with one another. These questions concerned the very nature of Jesus of Nazareth. The disciples shared with Jesus the present rumors being circulated: *“Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”* All the rumors were wrong. Men would always have their erroneous say about Jesus. The question asked of the disciples is directed to the Church. Peter, spokesman and representative, replies in the name of the Church: *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus’ response to this indicates Peter’s answer to be not only correct, but to be divinely inspired: *“No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father”*(Mt.16:13-17). Only by divine inspiration can man truly know who Jesus of Nazareth is. This same truth Paul expressed in these words: *“. . . the mystery of Christ unknown to men in former ages but now revealed by the Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets”* (Eph.3:5). We read also in Peter’s first epistle: *“. . . what has now been proclaimed to you by those who preach the gospel to you, in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Into these matters angels longed to search”* (1Pt.1: 12).

Jesus’ words to Peter--*“No mere man has revealed this to you, but My heavenly Father”*--truly implies that without divine assistance, man cannot know the true nature of Christ. God sent the Holy Spirit to the Church to witness to Jesus in the Church (John 14:26) and guide the Church to fullness of truth: *“The Spirit of Truth will guide you to all truth”* (Jn.16:13). Paul taught the Corinthians: *“No one knows what lies at the depths of God but the Spirit of God. The Spirit we have received is God’s Spirit, helping us to recognize the gift He has given us”* (1Cor.2:11-12).

If today Jesus addressed this same question to the Catholic Church, *“Who do you say that I am,”* how would the Church answer him? It would respond with

the words of Peter: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!*” “*You are true God and true Man!*” It would go on to clarify that belief—

*In You are two natures: one divine, begotten from all eternity, and the other human, taken from a daughter of Adam, the Virgin Mary. In You is One Divine Person--the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. You are personally distinct from the Father and Holy Spirit. In Your Divine Person, the two natures are perfectly united without one being absorbed into the other, or without the two natures mixed together to form a single nature. In You, both natures remain intact. You are simultaneously both a divine and a human Being. As Man, You possess a real human body, a true human soul, and a true human will. In this human nature You could and did suffer and die. As a Divine Person, You possess a divine will with infinite power. Whether You work through the divine or human nature, it is the Person who operates--all Your deeds are attributable to the Person of the Incarnate Word--Jesus Christ. This union of the divine and human in the Second Person--known in time as Jesus Christ--will continue forever. Both as God and Man, You are the natural Son of God. You are totally free of all sin. You became man to redeem men who could not redeem themselves.*

To this response Jesus could reply: “*No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.*”

In his farewell address to the Church, Paul warned the presbyters of the Church: “*Keep watch over yourselves, and over the whole flock the Holy Spirit has given you to guard. Shepherd the Church of God which He acquired at the price of his own blood. I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come among you who will not spare the flock. From your own number men will present themselves distorting the truth, leading astray any who follow them*” (Acts 20:28-30). These words of Paul were indeed prophetic. As the centuries unfolded, men came with colorful names from exotic places, teaching within the Church their erroneous opinions about who the Son of Man is. These teachings denied either the divinity of Christ or his humanity.

Considering the large number of Jews converted to the Church, it comes as no surprise toward the end of the first century that a certain Cerinthus and a sect known as the Ebionites denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. They insisted there is one God and only One Person in God. Following this same line of thought,

Theodotus of Byzantium developed the Adoption Theory. Theodotus taught Jesus to be a mere man born in a supernatural manner of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. He maintained that God adopted Jesus as His Son at the moment of his baptism in the Jordan River, and imparted to Jesus extraordinary divine powers. When Theodotus brought this teaching to Rome in 190 A.D., Pope Victor excommunicated him from the Christian Community. His errors persisted. Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, was deposed as a heretic by the Synod of Antioch in 268 A.D., for teaching this same error. Also, for the same teaching, the Synod of Sirmium, in 351 A.D., deposed Bishop Photinus of Sirmium. On the other hand, Noetus of Smyrna defended the divinity of Jesus Christ, but still maintained only One Person in God. Noetus said the Father Himself became man, suffered and died. St. Hippolytus of Rome condemned Noetus around 200 A.D. A certain Sabellinus picked up this teaching of Noetus and extended it to include the Holy Spirit. Sabellinus saw the One Person of God playing three different roles--One Actor in three different parts. In 217 A.D., Pope Callistus excommunicated Sabellinus and Pope Dionysius condemned this doctrine around 260 A.D.

Around 336 A.D., Arius, a priest from Alexandria, began to teach that the Word (*Logos*) is not co-eternal with the Father, but rather that He received his being immediately from the Father, though not from the Father's substance, before the beginning of time. The Word was at once begotten and created from nothing. The Word is not in a proper and true sense God, but is said to participate in God. It was the role of the Word to mediate between the Father and the world. Arius taught that the Word became flesh and the Word itself substituted for the human soul in Jesus Christ. (Interestingly, these teachings of Arius are largely held and promulgated today by the Jehovah Witnesses) The First General Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., condemned Arianism. This Council confirmed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God--generated from the substance of the Father and therefore of the same Divine Nature as the Father. Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople extended Arian's doctrine to the Holy Spirit, teaching the Holy Spirit to be a creature of the Son and in nature equivalent to an angel. In 381 A.D., the Second General Council of Constantinople condemned this doctrine and formulated a creed expressing the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Other teachers arose in the Church denying the humanity of Jesus Christ. Back again in the first century, the Gnostics (Marcion and Basileides), while not denying the divinity of the Word, denied that the Word became Flesh. The Gnostics maintained all material creation to be an evil product of the Evil

One; Jesus had only an apparent body without any material reality. Appelles and Valentin taught that Jesus possessed an astral body--purely spiritual in substance. The ancient Docetics believed this doctrine. Both St. Ignatius of Antioch (107 A.D) and St. Irenaeus (202 A.D) condemned these teachings.

Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, in 428 A.D., maintained the Son of Mary was not the same person as the Son of God. He taught that in Christ you have not only two natures, but also two persons. These two persons are only united by a moral union. The Man Jesus was not God but only the bearer of God. The Son did not become man; He merely dwells in Jesus in the same manner God dwells in the just. In 431 A.D., the Council of Ephesus, under the guidance of St. Cyril of Alexandria, condemned Nestorianism. This Council, in defense of the true divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, confirmed Mary to be Mother of God (*Theotokos*), and not merely Mother of Jesus the Man as Nestorius maintained.

Eutyches, Archmandrite of Constantinople, and the Patriarch Dioscur taught that in Jesus Christ, you have only One Nature and One Person. They taught that there is only One Nature in Jesus, even though He came from two natures. Either the human nature was assumed into the Divine Nature, as some held, the two natures blended into one new nature. The Fourth General Council of Chalcedon condemned these errors in 451 A.D. In order to win back certain heretics still adhering to this doctrine, Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople (620 A.D), suggested the compromise *Christ there are indeed two natures but only the Divine Will.* He taught that Christ had no human will. The Lateran Synod in 649 A.D., under Pope Martin I, rejected the teaching of Sergius.

Today, many of these old errors reappear with new labels--as Arianism in the creed of the Jehovah Witnesses. Certain modern theologians certainly deny the true divinity of Jesus while admitting Him to be "Son of God," in the sense that a consciousness of God's being His Father developed in Jesus in a unique way. Jesus communicates a unique knowledge of God, experienced personally by Him, to us, thereby revealing God as a loving Father to man.

The long history of the Church has confirmed the prophecy of Paul: *"From your own number, men will present themselves distorting the truth and leading astray any who follow them."* In his first epistle, St. John wrote: *"Many false prophets have appeared in the world . . . It was from our ranks that they took their leave--not that they really belonged to us; for if they had belonged to us,*

*they would have stayed with us. It only served to show that none of them was ours”(1Jn.2:19). Men never cease to have their say about Jesus of Nazareth, and their say is wrong! The Chinese have a proverb: “They say, are liars!” “He who denies that Jesus is the Christ, he is the antichrist, denying the Father and the Son. Anyone who denies the Son has no claim on the Father, but he who acknowledges the Son can claim the Father as well” (1Jn.2:22-23).*

Paul has expressed it well:

*The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. For him that is absurdity. He cannot come to know such teaching because it must be appraised in a spiritual way (1Cor.2:14).*

*And no one can say: “Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit” (1Cor.12:3).*

*“. . . every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God” (1John 4:2).*

The simplest theological explanation of what occurred within this divine phenomenon was expressed in a joint statement of agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and ancient Coptic Church:

*We confess our Lord and God and Savior and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to his divinity, perfect man with respect to his humanity. In Him, his divinity is united with his humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixture, without confusion, without alteration, with division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from his humanity for an instant, not for a twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh and took upon himself the form of a servant. In him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of humanity, together in a real, perfect indivisible and inseparable union. (Stated Pope Paul VI and Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda III, May 1973)*

**JESUS CHRIST: GOD-MAN!**

## LESSON FOUR

### WHO IS JESUS OF NAZARETH?

1. What are the opinions of non-Christians about Jesus Christ?
2. Who does the Catholic Church say Jesus is?
3. What does Jesus imply when He says that no mere man, but the Father has revealed this truth?
4. How many natures are there in Jesus Christ?
5. How many persons are there in Jesus Christ?
6. What do the two teachings above tell us about Jesus Christ?
7. What is meant by the Adoption Theory?
8. What was the heresy of Arianism?
9. What did the Church Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. teach about Jesus Christ?
10. What was the teaching of Nestorius about Jesus?
11. Why did the Church Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. proclaim Mary to be the Mother of God?
12. What does St. Paul imply when he says that “*no one can say: ‘Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit?*”

If you have any Questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL FAITH

Saint Paul once prayed for Christians: *“May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith”* (Eph.1:17). How does this prayer come to realization in the life of a Christian? To find an answer, we must first try to understand the meaning of “faith.” In the Book of Hebrews, we find a psychological definition of faith. It describes the effect of faith in a person: *“Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see”* (Heb.11:1). Faith gives *assurance* and *conviction* about matters beyond empirical experience--things that are the material for the hope residing within us.

This brings us to a more familiar definition of faith--one formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas: *“Faith is the act of the intellect when it assents to divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace.”* This definition emphasizes the role of the human intellect in the act of faith. The essential objects of such a faith for Christians would be the Triune God, and those things revealed by God. Such faith tells us who and what we have faith in. We are told that faith gives us the power to accept as true what God reveals, without fully understanding these revealed truths. This concept of faith became the foundation for the definition of faith given at the First Vatican Council:

*Faith is a supernatural virtue, by which, guided and aided by divine grace, we hold as true what God has revealed, not because we have perceived its intrinsic truth by reason, but because of the authority of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.*

Again, we see that this definition emphasizes the intellectual aspect of faith. If we can give mental consent to the articles of the Christian Creed--denying none of them--we would be said to possess the virtue of faith.

This is not exactly the faith that Paul prays for. He speaks of the power of faith as dwelling within the “heart” of the believer. This does not exclude intellectual assent, but implies much more. The expression “in your heart”



conveys more the idea of “in your person.” It implies that faith touches one’s entire personality. St. Thomas Aquinas suggests that the grace of faith first begins in the will before flowering forth in the intellect. God’s grace, operative in the human will, moves the intellect to believe. The “will” is at the very heart of a person. St. Thomas’ definition seems to imply that grace of faith first moves the soul to love that to which it later gives its assent. It preserves the concept of faith as being more of a total response within a person. This brings us closer to the concept of faith as manifested in the Bible.

Biblical faith centers not so much on what is believed, but rather, in *whom* we believe. A person, through grace, experiences God to be secure and firm--to be a reliable and faithful person. God keeps His word. God is reliable. He can be trusted. By believing, one acknowledges the fidelity of God. The Old Testament often pictured God as “*Rock*.” Biblical faith primarily expresses itself by trusting God. To trust God declares the fidelity of God. Israel came to this knowledge of God through the saving power of God’s Presence in its history.

The certainty that God can be trusted produces evident effects in the lives of people. Into the soul comes a reliance, a trust and confidence, in God. Because God is faithful, a person becomes secure in God’s fidelity. Faith moves the soul to abandon itself to God. It listens to His Words. It harkens to His Voice. It strives to obey His Will. Faith calls the soul to a total response to God. If the soul responds, faith causes the soul itself to become faithful. The soul begins to reflect, in some degree, the divine gift of fidelity. The response of man’s fidelity to God’s fidelity creates a spiritual environment in which the human soul lives and grows to spiritual maturity. Faith ultimately matures the soul in love. The Scriptures tell us: “*The righteous man lives by faith.*” It would be a more accurate translation to say “*by his fidelity.*”

Biblical faith finds beautiful expression in the 46th Psalm:

*God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress.  
Therefore we fear not, though the earth be shaken and mountains  
plunge into the depths of the sea; though its waters rage and foam  
and the mountains quake at its surging. The Lord of hosts is with  
us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.*

The life of Abraham depicts for us one of the greatest examples of faith in the Old Testament. At a call from God, Abraham leaves the security of his family,

his land--all the known and familiar--going forth as an alien into a foreign land. His sole trust is in the God who calls from the familiar, leads into the unknown, and says: *"Fear not! I am your shield!"*

God made Abraham a promise. Abraham was childless and God promised to make him the father of nations. This promise became the source of Abraham's faith. Before the promise he had faith. When the promise remained unfulfilled, he still had faith. The promise served to test and strengthen his faith. Through his long years of life, he discovered that God's ways are not man's ways. As the years passed, the promise remained but a promise. He watched himself and Sarah grow old. There was a time he hoped God would grant them a child while it was still physically possible to do so. That hope faded with the passing of the years. Yet faith remained—he hoped against hope. When there remained no natural foundation for hope, God revealed that Sarah would now bring forth a son.

With the birth of Isaac, Abraham held the cause of his hope in his arms. Yet, the test of faith was not ended. Faith must lead to love. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice the life of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. The promise fades to the background--faith in God moves to the forefront. Abraham must once again *"hope against hope."* At this point in Abraham's life, a new dimension was present. He loved Isaac more than he loved life itself. Something greater than faith empowered Abraham to climb Mt. Moriah with Isaac.

The love of God empowered him to climb that most difficult of all mountains. Abraham loved God above all things. On Moriah it was not Abraham's faith God lauded: *"I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son . . . you obeyed my command"* (Gn.22:12,18). *"There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love."* Jesus once said to His disciples: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me"*(Jn.14:1).

Christian Faith is born when a person comes to the same trust in Jesus that Abraham had in the Father. The Scriptures proclaim Jesus to be *"the way, the truth, and the life"* (Jn.4:6). Jesus is presented as the Door to God: *"No one comes to the Father but through me"* (Jn.14:6). The person comes to faith in Jesus who totally commits himself to the Way taught by Jesus--who knows it to be the supreme Truth—who experiences within his soul the saving effects of His Life: the forgiveness of sin and the newness of life. Faith in Jesus leaves behind the security found in one's "good" works. Self-confidence and self-

righteousness die. Complete confidence is placed in the merits of Jesus' death to bring one to a life of grace and ultimately into the full effects of the redemption.

Faith involves traveling in the dark. In a sense, faith is always blind--it involves trusting in the light, the love and the vision of another. When we live by faith, it is like we are in a valley filled with dangerous ravines and treacherous rivers, and we desire to leave the valley and reach the safety of the mountain top. In order to reach that mountain top, we must close our eyes, put our hand into that of another and permit the other to lead us. If we lack faith in that person, we will be filled with anxiety and fear. We will move slowly along with our guide--feeling our way, holding back, freezing up, and refusing to move at times. We will have to open our eyes and take a peek to reassure ourselves. This is the representative picture of faith possessed by many. It stimulates from Jesus: *"Oh you of little faith--Why do you doubt?"* Such faith impedes miracles. *"The disciples approached Jesus and asked him privately: 'Why could we not expel it?' 'Because you have so little trust,' he told them. 'I assure you, if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would be able to say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible for you'" (Mt.17:19-20).*

The secret of the sanctity of the little French girl, Therese Martin, who died a saint at twenty-four, was faith. She traveled over the road of sanctity in a short while because she put her hand in the hand of God, and He led her. She never became anxious, she never took a peek--but with the docility of a little child she followed the Father's lead. She did confess that in the last three years of her life she had made more acts of faith than in her entire previous years of life. Through faith, how quickly she safely arrived home!

## LESSON FIVE

### THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL FAITH

1. What do you understand by the expression “faith is a supernatural virtue”?
2. What do you understand by an intellectual faith?
3. What is the difference between a purely intellectual faith and “biblical” faith?
4. How is biblical faith expressed in the life of a Christian?
5. How did Abraham express faith in God?
6. What is meant by saying that faith implies “traveling in the dark”?
7. What greater virtue should an active faith lead to?
8. How was this demonstrated in the life of Abraham?
9. Why do you think a lack of faith impedes the working of God’s power in our life?
10. How would you define or describe an act of faith?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE SACRAMENT OF CHRIST

Pentecost celebrates the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church purchased through His precious blood. Today it is indeed a sorrow to hear people teach that one does not need the Church, but only Jesus. These people are indeed in darkness. The Sacred Scriptures do not support such a belief.

It was unthinkable to a Jew of the Old Testament that a person could be saved outside of the Jewish Community. If a Jew was to have life, the person had to be one with the community, the people of God. To be cut off from the community was death. To be restored to the community was to be restored to life. Jesus Himself confirmed: *“Salvation comes from the Jews.”*

In the Old Testament, the word for the religious community was *kahal*. When the Old Testament was translated in Greek and Latin, the word *kahal* was rendered *ecclesia*. When translated into English, *kahal* or *ecclesia*, became “church.” The word means an assembly or community. The Church is the community of people who are united in the belief and profession that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. At Antioch, probably around 40 A.D., this community was first identified as Christian. St. Ignatius, martyred approximately 96 A.D., was the first to call the Christian community “catholic.” This underlined the truth that the Christian community welcomed all mankind into its membership.

The early Christian community believed as firmly as the Jews of the Old Testament that membership in the Catholic Christian community was necessary for salvation. In the second century, Origen declares: *“Outside of the Church nobody will be saved.”* At the same time, St. Irenaeus wrote:

*All those have no part in the efficacy of the Spirit who do not hasten to the Church; rather they, by their evil teachings and their evil deeds, rob themselves of life. For where the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace” (Adv. haer. 111:24,1).*

The early Fathers of the Church were in agreement that those who knowingly separated themselves from the Catholic Church and who never returned could not be saved.

Why did the early Church believe and teach this doctrine? Let us examine the evidence that led to this conclusion. It is necessary to see and understand the Church as they did.

The Scriptures demonstrated to the early members of the Church that Jesus Himself founded the Christian Church. Jesus formed a visible community of men and women around Him. By His training of them, He separated them from Old Israel. He was making a New Israel. At a certain point in His public ministry, Jesus began to select certain individuals and call them into a unique relationship with Himself: *“He then went up the mountain and summoned the men He Himself had decided on who came and joined Him. He named twelve as His companions . . . whom He would send to preach the good news; they were likewise to have authority to expel demons” (Mk3:13-15).* Luke writes: *“At daybreak He called His disciples and selected twelve of them to be His apostles” (Lk.6:13).* Apostle means “one who is sent”; it was the equivalent of His saying He was making them His ambassadors, His agents. Mark relates that He taught them in a special way: *“. . . to them (the people) He spoke only by way of parables, while He kept explaining things privately to His disciples” (Mk.4:34).* Jesus tells the Twelve: *“To you the mysteries of the reign of God have been confided, but to the rest in parables” (Lk.8:10).*

The purpose of the selection and training of the Twelve later became clear. Jesus was establishing His Church. Jesus says to Simon, one of the Twelve: *“I for My part declare to you, you are ‘Rock,’ and on this rock I will build My Church.”* Jesus confirmed the indestructibility of His Church: *“And the jaws of death shall not prevail against it”(Mt.16:18).* To these twelve men Jesus transferred a whole series of powers. He promised to Peter the power to bind and loose: *“I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven”(Mt.16:19).* To the Twelve He gave the power to celebrate the Eucharist: *“Do this as a remembrance of Me”(Lk.22:19).* To them He gave the power to forgive sins: *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound”(Jn.20:23).* We read in Matthew that the people *“praised God for giving such authority to men”(Mt.9:8.)* Jesus commanded the

Twelve to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel, and He gave them the power to baptize:

*Full authority has been given to Me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name “of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world! (Mt.28:18-20).*

After His resurrection, He appointed Peter to be the Good Shepherd in His Church with the three fold command: “*Feed my lambs . . . Tend my sheep . . . Feed my sheep*” (Jn.21:15-17). Pope Leo XIII asks: “*What did Christ the Lord achieve by the foundation of the Church; what did He wish? This: He wished to delegate to the Church the same office and the same mandate which He had Himself received from the Father in order to continue them.*” The Scriptures clearly show Jesus bequeathed His mission to the Apostles. “*As you have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world*”(Jn.17:18). “*As the Father has sent Me, so I send you*”(Jn.20:21).

The Apostles considered themselves to be the servants and ambassadors of Jesus Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “*Men should regard us as servants of Christ and administrators of the mysteries of God*”(1Cor.4:1). Again Paul writes: “*He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors of Christ, God as it were appealing through us*”(2Cor.5:19-20).

We see from the Scriptures that Jesus is the founder of the Church, and He sends the Church into the world as His representative. But what is the personal ongoing relationship of Jesus to the Church? This relationship truly defines the Church. Speaking of Jesus, Paul writes to the Colossians: “*It is He who is the head of the body, the Church*”(Col.1:18.) To the Ephesians Paul writes: “*Christ is the head of His body the Church, as well as its savior*”(Eph.5:23). Again Paul writes: “*You form a building which rises on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the capstone*”(Eph.2:20). In his farewell speech to the elders of Ephesus, Paul teaches the Church to be the property of Jesus, “*purchased by His own precious blood*” (Acts 20-28).

Paul sees the Church as the very bride of Christ: *“Christ loved the Church. He gave himself up for her to make her holy, purifying her in the bath of water by the power of the word, to present to Himself a glorious church, holy and immaculate without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort . . . Christ cares for the Church--for we are members of His body”*(Eph.5:25-27,29-30). Just as a couple when married becomes one, Paul sees the Church to be one with Jesus.

While still a persecutor of the Church, Paul begins to learn the great lesson that Jesus identifies with the Church. On the road to Damascus Paul the persecutor encounters Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus asks him: *“Saul, Saul why do you persecute Me?”* (Acts 9:4). From this day on, Paul gradually begins to understand the unique, divine relationship existing between this Christian community and Jesus Christ--they form a Person. This Person is the Temple of God: *“Through Him the whole structure is fitted together and takes shape as a holy temple of the Lord; in Him you are being built into this temple to become a dwelling place for God in the Spirit”*(Eph.2:21-22). Christ formally identifies Himself with the Church and her members when He, as Judge of the world declares: *“I was hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink”*(Mt.25:35).

St. Augustine answers the question *“What is the Church?”* with the words:

*The body of Christ. Add to this Christ the Head and it becomes a man . . . . Let us congratulate ourselves, and give thanks, that we have not only become Christians but Christ . . . be astonished, rejoice, we have become Christ; for where He is the Head, we the members, the whole Man is He as we the whole Christ!*

*In the light of Christ . . . there is no name more noble, none more excellent, none more Divine, than the expression, “the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.”*

It is called *“mystical body”* to distinguish it from the historical body of Jesus and to indicate the hidden and mysterious character of the communion of power and grace existing between Jesus and the members of the Church.

In the Church we have a word called *sacrament*. This word means *“a holy sign.”* A sacrament not only symbolizes, but actually causes to be present what it symbolizes. Jesus is the Sacrament of God’s Presence in this world. Jesus said to Philip: *“Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say,*



***‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?’ (Jn.14:9,10). As Jesus is the Sacrament of God’s Presence in this world, so the Church is the Sacrament (or sign) of Jesus Christ’s Presence in this world. “Receive you the Holy Spirit--As the Father has sent Me, I send you. . . He that hears you, hears Me.” What we call “the Seven Sacraments” within the Church are the seven sacred channels through which Jesus and the Holy Spirit flow through the Church into the lives of individual believing men and women. Just as Jesus could say, “One does not come to the Father except through Me,” the Church can rightly say, “One does not come to Jesus except through the Church.” St. Augustine writes: “Only the body of Christ lives from the Spirit of Christ. . . Will you live of the Spirit of Christ? Then be in the body of Christ! . . . The Spirit does not pursue a separated member!”***

## LESSON SIX

### THE SACRAMENT OF CHRIST

1. What did the word “church” mean to you in the past?
2. What does the word “church” mean?
3. Where and when was the Church first called Christian?
4. What did that name imply?
5. When was the Christian Church first called “catholic”?
6. What does it imply to call the Christian Church “catholic”?
7. How do we know from the Scriptures that Jesus established a church on earth?
8. What does the Gospel according to John 20:21 teach us about the Church?
9. According to St. Paul, how did the apostles see themselves?
10. What is the ongoing relationship between the Risen Christ and His Church?
11. What does St. Paul mean in saying the Church is the “Temple of God”?
12. What does the Gospel according to Matthew 25:35 teach us about the Church?
13. What is meant by the Church being the Mystical Body of Christ?
14. What is meant by “sacrament”?
15. What is meant by saying the Church is the Sacrament of Christ in the world?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 7

### SOUL OF THE CHURCH

It is clear from the Scriptures that the Church is the Body of Christ in this world. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, we may ask what is the soul of the Church? The soul animating the body defines what a thing can be and do. The bird flies, the fish swims, the man thinks because of his unique soul. By discovering the soul of the Church, we can determine the power residing in the Body of Christ on this earth.

The Holy Scriptures confirm that there exists a special relationship between the Church and the Holy Spirit. St. Paul sees the Church as a Temple being constructed in order to house the Holy Spirit: *“You (plural) are being built into this Temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the spirit” (Eph.2:22)*. Paul asks the Corinthians, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells within you?”(1Cor.3:16)*. What are the effects of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Christian community? The first effect is unity in diversity. The Holy Spirit makes the many one: *“The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us . . . were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit” (1Cor.2:12-13)*. To the individual members of the Christian community, the Holy Spirit gives individual gifts for the building up of the Temple of God: *“There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1Cor.12:4-7)*. *“But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills”(1Cor.12:11)*. St. Paul enumerates the following effects of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community: *“No one can say: ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit”(1Cor.12:3)*. *“Through the Spirit one receives faith . . . . To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge . . . by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing . . . to another power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting tongues.” (1Cor.12:8-10)*. The Holy Spirit is the source of divine love within the community: *“The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the*

*Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rm.5:5). Paul teaches the Galatians that the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity in the Christian community are fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The Holy Spirit leads the Church to truth: “When he comes, however, being the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you to all truth” (Jn.16:13). The Holy Spirit effects the forgiveness of sins in the Church: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven” (Jn.20:22). Writing to Titus, Paul confesses that God saves individuals “through the baptism of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he lavished on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs, in hope, of eternal life” (Ti.3:5-7).*

St. Paul teaches us that the ministries in the Church flow from the operations of God’s Holy Spirit. *“God has set up in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracle workers, healers, assistants, administrators, and those who speak in tongues” (1Cor.12:28). From the midst of the Community, the Holy Spirit calls forth shepherds to guide the Church! Speaking at Miletus to the elders of Ephesus, Paul said, “Keep watch over yourselves, and over the whole flock the Holy Spirit has given you to guard. Shepherd the Church of God”(Acts20:28). The Holy Scriptures confirm that the Holy Spirit works through the shepherds of the Church to guide the Community; Peter says at the Council of Jerusalem, “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary . . . .” (Acts15:28).*

Paul tells Timothy that the rich deposit of faith is guarded *“with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us”(2Tim.1:14). Lastly, the Scriptures confirm that our own resurrection from the dead is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit: “He who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his Spirit dwelling in you”(Rom.8:11).*

With very rare exceptions, all the operations of the Holy Spirit are spoken of as being in the Christian community rather than in individuals. The Holy Spirit is in individual members only in so far as they are members of the Christian community. Even the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to individuals are given for the common good.

The Scriptures make it very clear that there is no operation in the Church that is not attributed to the Holy Spirit. With this overwhelming evidence, it is understandable why St. Irenaeus, who died around 202 A.D., cried: *“Where*

*the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all graces.*” It is understandable that the Church declares the Soul of the Church to be the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine, born in 354 A.D., compares the activities of the Holy Spirit in the Church to the operations of the soul in a human body: *“What the soul is for the body of man, that the Holy Spirit is for the body of Christ, that is, the Church. The Holy Spirit operates in the whole Church that which the soul operates in the members of the one body.”* In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas called the Holy Spirit the Heart of the Church because he believed the heart to be the central organ, out of which all life powers stream to the body. In the mind of Thomas, Jesus is the Head of the Church and the Holy Spirit is the Heart. This teaching Pope Leo XIII confirmed in 1897: *“Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit her soul”*(*Divinum illud*). Pius XII taught the Holy Spirit to be the principle of being and life in the Church.

From these teachings we see that the Catholic Church is not just a congregation of men and women who share a common belief about Jesus Christ. It is not just another visible institution of people in this world any more than Jesus of Nazareth was just an ordinary man. The Church is a unique and special organization, created by God for the salvation of mankind. Just as the Ark was necessary for the salvation of Noah and his family, so the Church is a necessary means for the salvation of mankind. Why is this so? Because the Catholic Church is truly the Presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit on this earth.

**LESSON SEVEN**  
**SOUL OF THE CHURCH**

- 1. What do you understand by the word “soul”?**
- 2. What may be called the Body of Christ on earth?**
- 3. What does St. Paul teach in Ephesians 2:22 and First Corinthians 3?**
- 4. What are some of the effects of the Holy Spirit within the Church?**
- 5. Does the Church possess any good not attributed to the Holy Spirit?**
- 6. What do we learn from First Corinthians 12:28?**
- 7. What does Romans 8:11 teach us?**
- 8. What does St. Augustine teach us about the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Church?**
- 9. Why is the Church important for the salvation of mankind?**

**If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.**

## CHAPTER 8

### CATHOLIC TEACHING ON BEING SAVED

Recently while driving down the freeway, I heard a Christian radio station which encouraged listeners to call in with questions. A young man called and explained that he had once been saved but fell from grace, and now wanted to know what he must do. The minister responded that he had probably not been saved, as evidenced by his falling away. John Calvin, a Protestant reformer, held it could only be lost by a loss of faith. You could tell the minister's answer left the young man perplexed in spirit and perhaps tinged with a bit of despair. I could not but reflect how different the Catholic doctrine of grace and justification was from that implied by the radio minister.

There are three fundamental principles in traditional Protestantism in opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church. These root principles express themselves in a variety of ways among the different Protestant communities. When these principles are practically applied to everyday religious life, they have a wide range of effects upon many aspects of Christian life. The first of these principles holds the Holy Scriptures to be the sole source of Christian Revelation. This we previously discussed. The other two are: faith without works saves; and a person receives the grace of justification at baptism rather than the grace of sanctification.

In these last two areas, there exist some subtle but essential differences between the Catholic Church and most Protestant communities. Many errors circulate about Catholic beliefs in these matters. This causes no surprise, as few Catholics truly understand the beautiful teachings on grace and justification taught by the Church at the Second Council of Orange in 529 A.D., and a thousand years later at the Council of Trent.

First, let us review the common ground of mutual belief. We agree that Jesus is the Christ and the Savior of all mankind. The life and death of Jesus atoned for the sins of all men. Jesus merited, by His death on the Cross, salvation for all men. No person merits his own salvation. No human being gains heaven through his own personal merits. Faith is essential for salvation: “. . . *it is the justice of God which works through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. All*

*men have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. All men are now undeservedly justified by the gift of God, through the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus”(Rom.3:22-24). The Catholic Church teaches that faith “is the beginning of salvation, the basis and the root of all justification.” Faith is indispensable for the justification of unbelievers: “Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that comes to God must believe that He is; and is a rewarder to them that seek Him” (Heb.11:6).*

To say that faith is the beginning, the basis, and root of justification is not the same as saying faith *alone* saves. Jesus came to save human beings and He saves them as human beings. The Church upholds the freedom of human will. For a person to perform a truly human act, the deed must flow from the free will of the person. The grace of God must act upon the human will and call the soul to faith and salvation, but the divine influence is not irresistible. The human will remains free under the influence of grace to assent or resist God’s call to salvation. This the Holy Scriptures imply: *“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live”(Dt.30:19). “How often have I yearned to gather your children . . . but you refused Me” (Mt.23:37). “You are always opposing the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51). St. Augustine taught that justification is not only a work of grace, but at the same time a work of the free will. “He who created thee without thy help does not justify thee without thy help.” The Church holds that along with faith there are cooperative works on the part of man that are necessary for salvation. These works of man cannot merit salvation, but they are conditional along with faith necessary to receive salvation. Along with faith, sorrow for sins committed must never be absent, as forgiveness is not possible without an interior turning from sin. As Peter preached in Jerusalem: “You must reform and be baptized . . . that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”(Acts2:38). The Prophet Ezekiel preached: “Turn and be converted from all your crimes, that they may be no cause for guilt for you. Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.” (Ez.18:30,31). The scriptures certainly confirm that love cannot be absent in a saving faith: “That we have passed from death to life we know because we love the brothers. The man who does not love is among the living dead”(1Jn3:14). St. Augustine writes: “Without love faith can indeed exist but can be of no avail.”*

When it comes to the definition of a faith that saves, the Catholic and Protestant differ. This difference can best be understood in the light of their teachings on the grace of salvation. The Protestant reformers believed



justification, resulting from faith and baptism, to be imputed to a person like a juridical declaration from a judge. In other words, a sinner stands before God, but because of his faith in Jesus and his baptism, Jesus stands between the Father and the sinner (the criminal). The merits of Jesus are imputed to the sinner. In other words, the merits of Jesus are moved over in the sinner's ledger--far outweighing all his sins. These sins are not imputed to the sinner but the merits of Jesus are. The sinner is saved through Jesus. God sees neither the sinner nor his sins, but only Jesus and His sacrifice. This doctrine finds support in such Scriptures as *"You have forgiven the guilt of your people; you have covered all their sins"*(Ps.85:3); *"I mean that God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself through Christ"*(2Cor.5:19); *"God it is who has given you life in Christ Jesus. He has made him our wisdom and also our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption"* (1Cor.1:30). This is very lovely, but the Catholic doctrine is even more beautiful.

In Catholic teaching the grace of justification enters into the very soul of the sinner, completely removing all sin from the soul. The baptized becomes as Christ--sharing in the very holiness and sanctity of Jesus: *"Each of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus"*(Gal.3:26). The baptized and Jesus become one, and the life of Jesus continues to grow and develop in the Christian soul by imitation of Jesus and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The holiness of the human soul is distinct from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer. The likeness of God's image can grow, day by day, more intense in the human soul: *"That divine power of His has freely bestowed on us . . . the great and precious things He promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature"*(2Pt.1:3,4). This is the Catholic doctrine of Sanctifying Grace. This doctrine is not accented in traditional Protestant theology. Justification, according to their theology, wipes away the sins but leaves the sinner--man remains a sinner always. Even if a soul dies a moment after baptism, it enters heaven as a sinner. In the Catholic theology, a sinner truly becomes just through sanctifying grace. In the state of sanctifying grace, a person can merit, by his or her good works, an increase in sanctifying grace and reward in heaven. This doctrine is really the basis for the Protestant difficulty in accepting the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the intercession and devotions to the Saints, the doctrine of merit and good works, the Sacraments of Penance and Confirmation.

Flowing out of this doctrine on grace of justification, the faith that saves will be different for the Catholic and the Protestant. For the Protestant, the faith

that saves is an absolute confidence in Jesus as one's personal Savior. This fiducial faith expresses itself as absolute certainty of salvation. This act of faith does not touch the will of man, for, as Luther taught, the will remains essentially corrupted through sin and incapable of willing good. For a Catholic, the faith that saves must enter into the very soul of the person, effecting a spiritual purification and love that must express itself in good works in order to be genuine. For a Catholic, faith without works is dead and cannot save (Jas. 2:17).

A Catholic is often perplexed when a Protestant asks, "Have you been saved?" He or she knows the actual work of salvation has been completed by Jesus. A Catholic depends on the grace merited by Jesus not only to be initially justified but also to persevere in His saving grace until the end of life. Truly, from the beginning to the end of salvation, Jesus is Savior, but the Catholic knows he or she must willfully cooperate with God's grace. By serious sin, the grace of justification can be lost. The answer of the Catholic Church to the young man who asked the question on the phone would be: "The baptized who have fallen into serious sin can always be restored by true repentance." As the Scriptures tell us: *"I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ez.33:11). "The Lord shows you generous patience, since He wants none to perish but all to come to repentance"(2Pet.3:9). "Do you not know that God's kindness is an invitation to you to repent?"(Rom.2:4).* To the question, "Have you been saved?" a Catholic can reply, "I know my Redeemer lives, and, by His grace, I confidently hope to be saved." In the meantime, he or she should diligently heed the words of St. Paul: *"So then my dear beloved, obedient as always to my urging, work with anxious concern to achieve your salvation"(Phil.2:12).*

## LESSON EIGHT

### CATHOLIC TEACHING ON BEING SAVED

1. What three fundamental principles in traditional Protestantism are opposed to the Catholic faith?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
2. What are some principal areas of agreement between the Catholics and Protestants?
3. What do we learn from Hebrews 11:6?
4. Besides faith, what does the Catholic Church insist is necessary for salvation?
5. What does St. Augustine teach about the work of justification?
6. What is the Protestant Reformer's doctrine on justification?
7. What is the Catholic doctrine on justification?
8. What is the Catholic doctrine of Sanctifying Grace?
9. How would you describe the difference between "saving faith" for a Catholic and for the Protestant Reformers?
10. According to the Catholic Church, how is a person saved?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 9

### WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

Since the Scriptures teach the Church to be the Body of Christ on earth and the Holy Spirit to be the very Soul of the Church, and since the Church confirms this teaching, then the necessity of the Church for the salvation of mankind logically follows. The Church, as the divinely established means for salvation, enables a person to be incorporated into Jesus Christ, the Universal Savior of mankind, and likewise brings one into fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier of the human person. The early teachers of the Church, Origen (185 A.D.), St. Cyprian (200 A.D.), St. Augustine (354 A.D.), along with other Fathers of the Church, all agreed that those who knowingly separated themselves from the Catholic Church and never returned could not be saved. The Second Vatican Council confirmed: *“Whosoever, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by God through Jesus Christ, would refuse to enter her or to remain in her could not be saved”* (The Church - Sec. 14).

In order to be saved, one must not only believe in Jesus Christ but also must be baptized. Baptism is the indispensable condition for entry into the Kingdom of God. Jesus teaches Nicodemus: *“I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God’s kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit”*(Jn.3:5).

According to Mark, baptism is the door of salvation: *“Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation. The man who believes in it and accepts baptism will be saved; the man who refuses to believe in it will be condemned”*(Mk.16:15-16). When the repentant Jews of Jerusalem asked the apostles, *“What are we to do, brothers?”* Peter answered, *“You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:37-38). At the conversion of the pagan Cornelius, there was an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his family. This did not dispense them from being baptized. Peter said, *“What can stop these people who have received the Holy Spirit, even as we have, from being baptized with water?”* So he gave orders that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”(Acts 10:47-48).

Even though they had received the Holy Spirit, baptism was still considered essential for them.

Saul received a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus but did not receive the Holy Spirit until after baptism. Ananias said to Saul: “*Saul, my brother, I have been sent by the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the way here, to help you recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*’ Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized”(Acts9:17b-18). Saul believed in Jesus, but faith alone was not sufficient. He had to be incorporated into Christ--into the Church--through baptism. Pius XII declared: “*Only those are to be accounted really members of the Church who have been regenerated in the waters of Baptism and profess the true faith and have not cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefore, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority*” (*Mystici Corporis*).

The Church rightly teaches that “*outside the Church there is no salvation,*” but this does not imply that membership in the Church is absolutely necessary for salvation. Millions of people never come to membership in the Church. Are we to presume these souls are lost? Do the Scriptures not tell us that “*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . . that the world might be saved through Him*”(Jn.3:16a-17b)? That Jesus is “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*”(Jn.1:29b)? Does Jesus not tell his apostles that His blood will be shed “*in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins*”? (“*Many,*” in Aramaic, can imply “*all*”) The prophet Ezekiel proclaims that God does not desire the death of a sinner but his conversion. Writing to Timothy, Paul says, “*God wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth*”(1Tm.2:4). The Scriptures confirm the universal salvific will of God toward all men and that the atonement of Jesus covers the sins of all mankind. No human being is beyond the merits of Jesus Christ. All men can be saved through the merits of Jesus and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, outside the merits of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit there can be no salvation. It is for this reason that it may truly be said “*outside of the Church there is no salvation.*”

If God wills the salvation of all men, He wills the means necessary for their salvation. Ordinarily, men are saved through membership in the Church, for this is the ordinary means willed by God by which men come to salvation. To knowingly reject this means could mean to reject salvation. For the greater majority of human beings, external and/or internal circumstances militate

against their being actual members of the Church. God must provide extraordinary means by which they can be saved. It has been the constant teaching of the Church that men of good will shall never be lost. St. Cyprian and St. Ambrose teach that the divine Sun of Justice shines on all and for all. St. John Chrysostom believed the divine grace coming through Jesus is diffused everywhere, and that there is no soul that cannot feel its attraction. Even the strictest of fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, admits that the pagans had their “hidden saints and prophets.”

Augustine writes: *“They who defend their position, although false and perverse—having inherited it from parents who have been deluded and have fallen into error, and who moreover with care and discretion search for truth, prepared to amend should they discover it—these are in no sense to be regarded as heretics.”* St. Thomas Aquinas concedes that persons may be saved extra-sacramentally by baptism of desire and therefore admits the possibility of salvation without actual membership in the Church on the grounds of an implicit desire to be a member of the Church (St. Th. III 68,2). Pope Pius IX declared: *“It must be accepted as certain that those who suffer in invincible ignorance of the true religion are not for this reason guilty in the eyes of the Lord.”*

It was in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council that this traditional teaching of the Church reached its fullest expression. The Council confirmed:

*It is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained (Ecumenism Sec. 3).*

*The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and of action, and who show a true religious zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and Christ, Son of God and Savior. They are consecrated by baptism, through which they are united with Christ . . . . Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood (The Church Sec. 15).*

*One cannot impute the sin of separation to those who at present are born into these Communities and are instilled therein with Christ's faith. The Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers. For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church . . . . All those justified by faith through baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be honored by the title of Christian, and are properly regarded as brothers in the Lord by the sons of the Catholic Church.*

The Council goes on to say:

*The most significant elements or endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church herself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements. All of these, which come from Christ (Ecumenism Sec. 3).*

The Council also addressed itself to the salvation of the non-Christian. *“Those who have not yet received the gospel are related in various ways to the people of God.”*

Concerning the Jews: *“In the first place there is the people to whom the covenants and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. On account of their fathers, this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the call He issues” (Rom. 11:26b-29).*

Concerning the Moslems: *“But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.”*

Concerning all others: *“Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift, and who as Savior wills that ‘all men be saved’ (1Tm.2:4). Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help*

*necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace” (The Church – Sec. 16).*

When we contemplate the extensive mercy of God to all men, we may be tempted to become unconcerned about the missionary commission and command of Jesus: *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out all I have commanded you”*(Mt.28:19-20a). We must remember that outside of the Church our brothers and sisters are in so many ways defenseless before the wiles and snares of Satan. There is safety and protection in the Kingdom of God. Also, God wills not only the salvation of men, but their perfection: *“Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* Above all, we Christians should cherish these words of Jesus: *“My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples”*(Jn.15:8). For the glory of God and love of our neighbor, let us work that all men will come to be disciples of Jesus Christ.



## LESSON NINE

### WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

1. How is a person “incorporated into Jesus Christ”?
2. What does the Gospel according to John 3:5 teach us?
3. What do the Scriptures teach to be the effects of baptism?
4. According to Pope Pius XII, who are the true members of the Catholic Church?
5. Does the Catholic Church teach that explicit membership in the Church is necessary for salvation?
6. What is the ordinary means for salvation?
7. What do you understand by extraordinary means of salvation?
8. What do we learn about salvation from First Timothy 2:4?
9. What does St. Augustine teach about non-Catholics in good faith?
10. What did Pope Pius IX teach about people who are invincibly ignorant of the true faith?
11. According to the Second Vatican Council, what is the relationship of Protestants to the Catholic Church?
12. What do you understand by “outside of the Church there is no salvation”?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE GRACE OF SALVATION

Many Christians believe today that justification comes solely from faith in Jesus Christ. Over a public medium, you often hear, *“In order to be saved all you have to do is accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior and believe in your hearts that your sins are forgiven and you are saved!”* From this principle flows an old refrain: *“Once saved, always saved!”* It is the foundation for such preaching as *“the saved do not sin,”* or the other extreme, *“If you have faith in Jesus, you need not worry about sinning, for Jesus has already atoned of those sins, and they are not imputed to you.”* The above religious principle rests upon a few isolated Scriptures and a very narrow interpretation of them. The foundation of true religious principles must rest upon the fullness of divine revelation. For this reason the Catholic Church rejects the above principle and its deductions as being contrary to the fullness of Christian revelation.

The Church teaches that through Baptism a person enters into a state of justification before God, and that faith and repentance are demanded for a worthy reception of Baptism by an adult. We may ask, *“What is this human state that justifies a sinner before God?”* Is it just a psychological state of belief in which sin is no longer imputed to a sinner as many teach? No! It is much more. The state of justification consists in the removal of all sin from the soul and a divine spiritual transformation of the soul resulting from the Presence of the Holy Spirit entering and abiding in the baptized soul.

Sin is not merely covered over and not imputed to us. The Sacrament of Baptism removes original sin and all personal sins. The Holy Scriptures present the forgiveness of sin as a real and complete remission of sins. It speaks of God wiping away our sins. We read in Isaiah: *“It is I, I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more” (Is.43:25).* Peter preaches in Acts: *“Therefore reform your lives! Turn to God, that your sins may be wiped away!”(Acts 3:19).* The Psalmist prays that sin will be washed away: *“Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of Your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me”(Ps.51:3,4).* We read in Ezekiel: *“I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities”(Ez.36:25)* Ananias said

to Saul: *“Why delay then? Be baptized at once and wash away your sins as you call upon His name”*(Acts 22:16). Paul tells the Corinthians: *“You have been washed, consecrated, justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”*(1Cor.6:11). St. John writes: *“The blood of His son Jesus cleanses us from all sin . . . . If we acknowledge our sins, He who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong”*(1Jn.1:7-9).

Not only is sin removed in baptism but also the person’s very being becomes pure and holy in the sight of God. This is caused by the divinely created gift infused into the soul of the baptized. The Church calls this divine gift Sanctifying Grace. This grace renders a person a new creation in Christ--a new person. It changes the person so as to make kinship and communion with God possible. A new and precious life is infused into the soul so that a human being truly becomes a new creation in Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures confirm that the soul of man is regenerated, recreated, renewed, justified--made holy--made godly by the grace of God. In Ezekiel, God made this promise: *“I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony heart--I will put My spirit within you and make you live by My statutes, careful to observe My decrees”*(Ek.36:26,27). Jesus tells Nicodemus that a man must be reborn through water and the Holy Spirit (Jn.3:5). Paul tells Titus: *“He saved us through baptism of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”*(Ti.3:5). Paul encouraged the Ephesians: *“Acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth”*(Eph.4:23,24). Paul confirms that the Corinthians have become a new creation in Christ: *“This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new!”*(2Cor.5:17). Paul tells the Galatians that *“all that matters is that one is created anew.”* (Gal.6:15). Paul teaches the Romans that Christians have become *“sons of God,”* they have received a *“spirit of adoption,”* they have become *“children of God”* and *“heirs of God”*(Rom.8:14-16). When St. John teaches that Jesus is the Vine and his disciples are the branches, John implies that the very life of Jesus flows through the disciples:

*Live on in Me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine can you bear fruit apart from Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in Me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from Me you can do nothing* (Jn.15:4-5).

Again John confirms the holiness of the Christian soul when he writes these words of Jesus: *“Anyone who loves Me will be true to My word, and My Father will love him; We will come to him and make our dwelling place with him”*(Jn.14:23). St. Peter testifies that we have the power to live holy lives and even to share in the divine nature:

*That divine power of His has freely bestowed on us everything necessary for a life of genuine piety, through knowledge of him who called us by his glory and power. By virtue of them he has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of divine nature”* (2Pet. 1:3-4).

When the Church teaches that justification is caused by the presence of Sanctifying Grace, it teaches that our personal holiness is distinct from the Holy Spirit. In other words, Sanctifying Grace is not the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the just. It is indeed an effect of the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the baptized. For as St. John Chrysostom asked: *“For of all the gifts which contain within them our soul’s salvation, which of them has not been given us by the ministry of the Spirit?”* The Church tells us that Sanctifying Grace is both a divine quality and a created gift within the soul. This quality inheres in the very spirit of a person--giving the soul a kinship and likeness of God Himself. It makes possible a friendship between the creature and its Creator.

To say Sanctifying Grace is both creative and divine is to propose a difficult concept to the human mind. To be created and divine seems mutually exclusive. Perhaps Sanctifying Grace can best be understood as a divine effect of the Holy Spirit’s presence within the created soul. As St. John Chrysostom suggested, there can be no Sanctifying Grace without the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Yet the grace is distinct from the Presence of the Holy Spirit. There would be no sunlight without the sun. Yet light can be said to be distinct from the sun. The presence of the sun fills the whole world with its light. It illumines, transforms all things. Its presence can so affect a substance as to radically change the substance, and yet, we do not say that light is the sun or that the effects caused by the sun are the sun itself. So it seems to be with the soul and the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit enters the soul and the soul does not willfully resist or place barriers before the Presence of the Holy Spirit, His Presence, like that of the sun, causes amazing results within the creative spirit of a person.

The divine rays of the Holy Spirit touch the spirit of man, producing divine results in the creative substance of his or her spirit. We know that if the Presence of God filled a room, as it did the Temple of Solomon, nothing within the room would remain unaffected. It would assume a godly beauty, yet the room would remain distinct from God. When God came down upon Mt. Sinai, the Presence of God transformed the mountain--the mountain assumed a terrible beauty--yet, the mountain remained a mountain. Writing of the Holy Spirit, St. Basil the Great tells us:

*Shining upon those who have been purified of every stain, He makes them spiritual in heart, through union with Himself. For just as when the sunlight falls on clear transparent bodies, they too become resplendent, and begin to shine forth on others.*

Writing of the effects of the Holy Spirit, St. John Chrysostom tells us,

*Through Him we obtain forgiveness of sin; through Him are we made clean of every stain. Through the gift of Him we have been changed from men into angels, those among us who co-operate with His grace; not actually changing our nature, but, what is more wonderful, while remaining in the nature of men we show forth a manner of life that is worthy of angels. The soul that a little while ago was stained with the mire of sin is all at once more splendid than the sun. Such then is the power of the Spirit.*

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that at the moment of death or baptism, all the merits of the life and death of Jesus are applied to the baptized, just as if the soul had personally merited them. The soul becomes a divine seed bed. The grace of Baptism implants the potential to believe in God, hope in His promises and love Him above all. Of course, the actualizing of these gifts depends upon the baptized freely cooperating and exercising these gifts. This life of grace, as with all life, begins with great potentiality to be much more than it presently may be. The power to believe, to hope, to love are there, but the person must freely determine to use and exercise these powers. Power grows through exercise. Power can lie dormant and even in time, through non-use, atrophy. We freely and purposefully put on Jesus Christ by the constant exercise of the graces of Baptism.

St. Paul reminds his son in the faith, Timothy:

*“I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God bestowed when my hands were laid on you . . . . God has saved us and has called us to a holy life, not because of any merit of ours but according to His own design” (2Tim.1:6,9); “Seek after integrity, piety, faith, love, steadfastness, and a gentle spirit. Fight the good fight of faith. Take firm hold on the everlasting life to which you were called . . . . I charge you to keep God’s command without blame or reproach until our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear” (1Tim.6:11-14).*

## LESSON TEN

### THE GRACE OF SALVATION

1. What does the state of justification include?
2. What are the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism?
3. What does the presence of Sanctifying Grace do to the world?
4. What do we learn from the Gospel according to John 15:4, 5 and 14:23?
5. What do we learn about Christian life from 2 Peter 1:3, 4?
6. What do you understand Sanctifying Grace to be?
7. Is Sanctifying Grace the same as the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul?
8. How would you explain that Sanctifying Grace is both created and divine?
9. What does St. John Chrysostom teach to be the effects of the Holy Spirit within the Christian soul?
10. How does a Christian grow in the life of grace?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 11

### LIKE THE MUSTARD SEED

Some people, seeing the organizational structure of Church life today, long to return to the simplicity of the primitive Christian Church. The Church certainly grew and developed, but it never lacked a hierarchical structure. What many people imagine to have been the early Church is but a figment of their imagination. The Church established by Jesus Christ was not born in a religious or cultural vacuum. The first ten years of Church life centered around Jerusalem. Jewish religion and culture colored and controlled its formation. It could not conceive of itself other than Jewish. Its life style and organizational structure followed its Jewish models. The importance and the influence of the synagogue upon the early Church were significant. The early Christian Community patterned itself on the synagogue and in a sense were Christian synagogues. It certainly patterned its worship upon the liturgy of the synagogue, adding to it the celebration of the *agape* and the Eucharistic celebration. The government of the synagogue was committed to an elder called the "ruler of the synagogue" who had an assistant aiding him in the services and in the management of the synagogue. Before the end of the first century, we see the local churches being governed by elders and overseers called the *episkopos*, the bishops, assisted by ministers called deacons.

Probably the communal life of the Jewish Essenes had considerable influence upon Church formation. We have discovered recently a great deal about the life and organization of the Essenes--a popular Jewish sect existing during the formative years of the Christian Church. The general government of this community was carried out through two bodies: the General Assembly, composed of all mature members, and the Supreme Council. The Supreme Council was part of the General Assembly but it was a higher and more permanent body consisting of twelve men who represented the twelve tribes of Israel and three priests. The General Assembly was apparently the governing and legislative body for the community. It convened once a year on the Feast of Pentecost to renew the Covenant and receive new members. Smaller groups of community members were under the supervision of a priest learned in their book of Meditations, and a supervisor who instructed the congregation, acted as a good shepherd and supervised new members. The community also



possessed a “supervisor of the many” who presided at the head of “the many,” supervised the community’s goods, and examined new candidates.

In the Province of God, the Essenes may have served as a good example of organizational structure for the early Church. The Church did have a general assembly spoken of as the “community of the disciples.” We read in Acts: *“The Twelve assembled the community of the disciples. The proposal was unanimously accepted by the community”*(Acts6:2,5). The early Church was governed by a Supreme Council of twelve men called apostles. There is a close parallel between the supervisors in the Essene community and the bishops of the early Christian Community. The Greek word for bishop means an overseer or a supervisor.

God formed the Church of Israel upon the twelve tribes of Israel with Moses, under God, as leader. Jesus patterned his Church upon the Church of Israel. He founded His Church--the New Israel--upon twelve men with Simon Peter, under Christ Jesus, as head.

St. Luke describes the selection of these twelve men by Jesus: *“Then He went out to the mountain to pray, spending the night in communion with God. At daybreak He called His disciples and selected twelve of them to be his Apostles”* (Lk.6:12-13). Mark speaks of their selection in this fashion: *“He went then up the mountain and summoned the men he himself had decided on, who came and joined him. He named twelve as his companions whom he would send to preach the good news; they were likewise to have authority to expel demons”*(Mk.3:13-15). Matthew adds, *“Jesus sent these men on mission as the Twelve”*(Mt.10:5).

The Greek word *apostolos* means “to send.” The Greek Septuagint Bible translates the Hebrew *saluah* as *apostolos*. The root of *saluah* means “send.” It is used in 1Kings 14:6, where the prophet Ahijah speaks of having been “commissioned” by the Lord to deliver a message. The origin of the concept “apostles” is believed to be connected with a Jewish institution called the *sheluhim*. The word means “commissioned emissaries.” The Palestinian authorities established a legal institution of the *sheluhim*.” These were rabbis--often ordained by Jewish authority with the laying on of hands--who were commissioned and sent by Jewish authorities to represent them. The *sheluhim* were sent at times to collect tithes or the temple tax, and at other times to act with religious authority and proclaim religious truths. When acting within their commission, they had the full authority of the senders. We know Jesus said to the Twelve: *“As the Father has sent Me, so do I send you”*(Jn.20:21);

***“Whoever welcomes Me welcomes Him who sent Me.”(Lk.9:48).*** Jesus is the *Sheluh* of God--the Apostle of the Father! The Twelve are the *sheluhim* of Jesus. They are His commissioned emissaries empowered to act in His Name: ***“I assure you, whatever you declare bound on earth shall be held bound in heaven, and whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be held loosed in heaven”(Mt.18:18).*** He gave them power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood (Lk.22:19; 1Cor.11:23-30). After his Resurrection He gave them the power to forgive sins (Jn.20:23). Before His Ascension into heaven He said to the Apostles:

***Full authority has been given to Me both in heaven and on earth; go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world! (Mt.28:19-20).***

Jesus gave to His Apostles His authority and power, and He authorized them to exercise it. This we call apostolic power and authority.

In the New Testament we see the Church growing like a mustard seed. We read that ***“Peter stood up in the center of the brothers; there must have been a hundred and twenty gathered together”(Acts1:15).*** This number “120” is not accidental. The Jewish law stated (Mishnah - Sanhedrin 116) that in order for a Jewish Community to have its own governing body--its local *sanhedrin*--the community must have no less than 120 members. Of these, ten percent could be elected to the local *sanhedrin*. In Jewish eyes, this would now give the body the legal authority to act and render legal decisions. At this point, the Church selected Matthias to replace Judas. In the first years of Church life, all authority and power resided in Twelve Apostles. They were the teachers, the miracle-workers, and the leaders. The disciples ***“devoted themselves to the Apostles’ instructions”(Acts2:42); “With power the Apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesu.”(Acts4:33); “Through the hands of the Apostles, many signs and wonders occurred among the people”(Acts5:12); “Day after day, both in the temple and at home, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Messiah”(Acts5:42).***

When the burden of Church administration became too great, they decided to share part of it. ***“The Twelve assembled the Community of the Disciples and said, ‘It is not right for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.***

*Look around among your own number, brothers, for seven men acknowledged to be deeply spiritual and prudent, and we shall appoint them to this task. This will permit us to concentrate on prayer and the ministry of the word”*(Acts6:2-4). The Apostles alone ordained the seven: *“We shall appoint them to this task”*(Acts 6:3). The Apostles *“first prayed over them and then imposed hands on them”*(Acts6:6). First the Apostles prayed asking God to impart to these men the power to accomplish their new vocations; then they imposed hands on them which symbolized a sharing of power with them and actually imparting power to them. From this time on the seven began, not only to administer to the poor, but also to preach, teach, and baptize. Up to this point only the Apostles exercised these ministries.

For a member of the Christian Community to be a genuine minister within the Church, he must be called to the ministry by the Church, and ordained to the ministry by a person empowered to do so. You cannot give what you do not possess! Through the hands of the ordained minister, power passes into the spirit of the one being ordained. When Joshua replaced Moses, we read: *“Moses did as the Lord commanded him. Taking Joshua and having him stand in the presence of the priest Eleazar and of the whole community, he laid hands on him and gave him his commission, as the Lord had directed through Moses”*(Nm.27:22-23). The people of Israel were directed to lay hands on the Levites as a symbol that their lives were to be sustained by the people of Israel. The laying on of hands, whether in blessing, healing, or ordaining, symbolizes, and more than symbolizes, the establishment of a vital relationship between two persons in which some gift or power abiding in the one flows into the other.

At one part in Acts, the author tells us that “elders” existed in the Christian Church. The Christian Community in Antioch decided to send relief to the famine-stricken Church in Judea. *“They did this, dispatching it to the presbyters in care of Barnabas and Saul”*(Acts11:30). Elders or presbyters are mentioned for the first time in the Church. We know they played a prominent role in the Old Testament. We can best understand their position in the Church by studying their roles in the Jewish religion. The elders (*zaken*) appear in the Old Testament as a distinct social and ruling body with political and religious duties. In these duties they represented the entire people (Ex.3:16;4:29). They appeared as associates and companions of political leaders, particularly when they exercised authority (Ex.3:18; Dt.27:1). At times they appear as governing body (Jos.9:11; Jgs.8:5), and frequently as a

judicial body(Dt.19:12; Jos.20:4). As representatives of the people, they formed the King's council and served as a check upon his ruling power.

The appearance of elders in the Christian Community indicates the organizational development. These roles developed within the Church as the needs and times demanded. When Paul gives his farewell address to the elders or presbyters of Ephesus, he exhorts them: *"Keep watch over yourselves, and over the whole flock the Holy Spirit has given you to guard. Shepherd the church of God . . ."*(Acts20:28). He sees them as guardians and shepherds within the Church. Paul installed presbyters in the churches founded by him and Barnabas: *"In each church they installed presbyters and with prayers and fasting, commended them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith"*(Acts14:23). In Paul's letter to Timothy he attributes the gift of prophecy given to Timothy to the laying on of the hands of the elders (1Tm.4:14). Paul instructs Timothy: *"Presbyters who do well as leaders deserve to be paid double, especially those who work in preaching and teaching . . . . Pay no attention to an accusation against a presbyter unless it is supported by two or three witnesses"* (1Tm.5:17,19). St. James tells us that the prayers of the presbyters have the power to restore the sick to health (Jas.5:14-15). Peter exhorts young men to be subject to the elders (1Pt.5:5). By the time the epistle to Titus was written, the role of elders had apparently evolved more into the role of bishop and priest as we find today in the Church.

By the turn of the century we find the Didache urging the members of the Church: *"Elect for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord . . . ."* We find St. Ignatius of Antioch, the third bishop of Antioch, writing around the year 110 A.D.:

*You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father and the presbytery as you would the Apostles. Reverence the deacons as you would the command of God. Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints. Nor is it permitted without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate the agape; but whatever he approves, this too is pleasing to God, so that whatever is done will be secure and valid (Letter to the Smyrnaeans).*

St. Irenaeus writes around 200 A.D.:

*Polycarp, however, was instructed not only by the Apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna by the Apostles in Asia. I saw him in my early youth . . . . He always taught those things which he had learned from the Apostles, and which the Church had handed down, and which are true . . . . It is necessary to obey those who are the presbyters in the Church, those who, as we have shown, have succession from the Apostles; those who have received, with the succession of the episcopate, the sure charism of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father. But the rest, who have no part in the primitive succession and assemble wheresoever they will, must be held in suspicion. (Against Heresies)*

St. Clement of Alexandria writes around 210 A.D.:

*After the death of the tyrant, the Apostle John came back again to Ephesus from the Island of Patmos; and, upon being invited, he went even to the neighboring cities of the pagans, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, and there to ordain to the clerical estate such as were designated by the Spirit.*

The history of the Church confirms the words from Ephesians: “*And he (Jesus Christ) gave some as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ*” (Eph.4:11). Even from its mustard seed days, the Church was never without organization and authority. It never appears as a flock in which the sheep were internally directed by some divinely synchronized radar equipment. The Church never appears in Scripture or history without its visible shepherds and guardians.

## LESSON ELEVEN

### LIKE THE MUSTARD SEED

1. What were the religious and cultural roots of the Catholic Church?
2. What was the early church organizational structure patterned on?
3. What does the word “bishop” signify?
4. What is the significance of “twelve” apostles?
5. What is implied by saying the Twelve were the Apostles of Jesus Christ?
6. What special powers were given to the Twelve?
7. What is the significance of the number 120 in Acts 1:15?
8. In the early Church, within whom did all authority reside?
9. What do we learn from Acts 6: 2-4?
10. How did the Seven become deacons?
11. How does one become a legitimate minister in the Church?
12. Who were the “elders” or “presbyters” in the early Church?
13. What do we learn from Acts 20:28 about their work in the Church?
14. What does Ephesians 4:11 teach us?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 12

### ON A ROCK FOUNDATION

The concept conveyed by the word “church” finds meaning in the Hebrew words *edah kahal*, connoting the solemn assembly of Israel before Yahweh--expressed concretely when the people of Israel gathered at Mount Sinai to enter into a covenant with God. *Edah Kahal* describes this solemn assembly of God’s people for a religious purpose. When Hebrew scholars translated the Scriptures into Greek, they translated this concept as *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* in secular Greek signified an assembly of the citizens of a city for juridical and legislative purposes. Both in Hebrew and Greek the words describe a visible assembly of people for some solemn purpose. The word “Church” connotes such an assembly.

At Sinai, Moses was the recognized leader of the People of God. Moses represented the people before Yahweh and Yahweh before the people. When Moses’ life drew to an end, he appointed Joshua to succeed him as leader. The citizens of the Greek cities elected or appointed magistrates to govern them. The acceptance of these leaders symbolized the corporate unity of the people and actually caused unity. When men rebelled against the authority of Moses, they threatened the unity and peace of Israel. We know when citizens refuse to obey magistrates of a city, chaos and anarchy reign.

The author of the Acts identifies the Christian Community as a “church” (*ekklesia*) (Acts 5:11). The Church appears in Acts as a united body: “*The community of believers were of one heart and one mind*”(Acts 4:32). Simon Peter, one of the Twelve Apostles, appears as the recognized leader and spokesman for the Church. Peter calls for and supervises the election of Matthias, replacing the Apostle Judas (Acts 1:15-26). On Pentecost Sunday he preaches the first sermon of the Church (Acts 2:14-40). Through Peter the Church performs its first miracle with the cure of a crippled man (Acts 3:1-8). Twice Peter defends the Church before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8-22; 5:27-32). He publicly commits the Church to a policy defying the Jewish authority. Peter delivers a sentence of condemnation against Ananias and Sapphira--two unfaithful Christians (Acts 5:1-11). The very shadow of Peter was believed to be curative to the sick (Acts 5:15). Peter raised a dead woman

to life (Acts 9:36-41). Peter ordered uncircumcised Gentiles to be received into the Church (Acts 10:44-48). Yahweh had decreed circumcision to be necessary for entering a covenant relationship with Him (Gen.17:9-14). Peter, in practice, abrogates this law. His action caused a great deal of upset in Judea. Peter formally declares to the Church that there is no need for Gentiles to be circumcised nor live by the Mosaic Law in order to be saved—“*At that the whole assembly (Church) fell silent*” (Acts 15:6-11). Peter exercises a power of binding and loosing in the early Church.

How could a man, who to a maidservant once denied knowing Jesus, exercise such power and leadership in the Church? He could only do so because of a personal appointment by Jesus Christ!

The word “church” appears only thrice in the four gospel accounts. In one case where the word appears twice, the Lord tells the disciples to refer the case of an offensive brother to the Church for a decision (Mt.18:17). This instruction implies a visible organization with certain members possessing juridical powers. In the second incident in which “church” is used, Jesus implies He will establish His own Church. Jesus had personally selected twelve men as His companions and apostles (Mk3:13-19). These men Jesus took to Caesarea Philippi, a region noted for its pagan shrines. Here Jesus questioned His disciples concerning men’s opinion about Him. They shared with Him the rumors heard. All were erroneous. Jesus asked His disciples, “*But who do you say that I am?*” and implied their distinction from other men. Simon Peter, under divine inspiration, had the correct conception about Jesus: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!*” Peter expressed the foundation faith of Christianity. From this belief everything else would flow. Without it, no true Christian discipleship would be possible. When men could not attain to this faith, they found it impossible to believe the teachings of Jesus. They would abandon Jesus. When Jesus asked the Twelve if they would go away from him, Peter responded: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced you are God’s holy one*”(Jn.6:66-69). Jesus recognized Peter’s faith in Him to be divinely inspired. Jesus said:

*Blessed are you Simon bar Jonah (“bar Jonah” meaning “son of dove”)! No mere man has revealed this to you, but My heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you, you are “Rock,” and on this rock I will build My Church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*



*Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven;  
whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven  
(Mt.16:13-19).*

Later, Jesus gives the same power to bind and loose to all Twelve Apostles, symbolizing it to be a power given to the Church (Mt.18:18). Jesus changed Simon's name to *Kepha*. *Kepha* was a form of substratum rock needed for a solid foundation. The word appears in the Greek as *petra* and as "Peter" in English. Jesus implies that Simon will, in some way, become the firm foundation for supporting His Church.

Many deny this refers to the person of Peter, but only to the faith expressed by Simon Peter. The element of faith is certainly essential in understanding this text. Simon's expression of faith in Jesus initiated Jesus' declaration to Simon. The faith professed by Simon expresses the essential element of Christian belief. But, Christian Faith is not only a faith to live; it is a living faith. This faith cannot be separated from Peter. In Semitic culture a man's name ought to express the man. Jesus recognized that Simon's faith in Him was so much a part of his being that it truly constituted his person. Peter's faith was the ground for his being appointed by Christ as the support and foundation of His Church. The "Rock" is Christ, but Simon's faith was so divine, so strong, so enduring that it identified him with Jesus, the Rock. Jesus recognized the divine solidification of Simon's personality by faith and renamed him "Rock."

St. Augustine (354 A.D.) apparently could not make up his mind whether Jesus taught that the Church was to be built upon the person of Peter or upon the faith expressed by Peter. He expressed both opinions. Someone, no doubt, brought this contradiction in his preaching to his attention. Augustine acknowledged this and added: "*The reader may choose whichever of these two opinions may seem to him the more probable.*" But, when you realize you cannot separate the man from the faith nor the faith from the man, the difficulty dissolves.

The Gospels indicate a special relationship between Peter and Jesus. From the boat of Peter, Jesus teaches (Lk.5:3). Jesus paid the temple tax for Peter and Himself alone (Mt.17:27). The Risen Jesus appeared to Peter alone before appearing to the other Apostles (Lk.24:34;1Cor.15:5). Jesus prayed particularly that Peter's faith would not fail and he would be a stabilizing and unifying principle in the Church: "*Simon, Simon! Remember that Satan has*

*asked for you, to sift you all like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers” (Lk.22:31-32).*

No Scripture text more powerfully supports the truth that just as Moses appointed Joshua to take his place in the church, Jesus appointed Simon Peter to take His place, than the last page of the last written gospel account. There three times Jesus confirms Peter as Shepherd of the Flock with, *“Feed my lambs,” “Tend my sheep,” “Feed my sheep.”* The last recorded deed of Jesus in the Gospel declares Simon Peter to be Shepherd--to take the place of Jesus who called Himself the *“Good Shepherd.”* In Semitic culture, contracts were established by declaring a thing publicly three times. In the Old Testament, the symbolism of shepherd strongly represented authority. Both God and King David were called the Shepherd of Israel.

The Scriptures demonstrate, and tradition confirms, that Jesus established Simon Peter as the visible Head of the Church, and the unifying principle in the Christian community. The changing of Simon’s name guarantees that Peter will give a unity and strength to the Church like a rock foundation gives to a building. Bestowing upon Peter the keys of the kingdom symbolized his unique authority in the Church. The words of Jesus to Peter recall those of Yahweh of Eliakim: *“I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open” (Is.22:22).* Again in Revelation we see the symbolism of the key signifying authority: *“The holy One, the true, who wields the key of David, who opens and no one can close, who closes and no one can open” (Rev.3:7).* In the Scriptures, “keys” symbolize power and authority. The power given to Peter “to bind” and “to loose” reinforces the symbolism of the keys. In Rabbinical language, the power to bind and to loose implies the power to render legal decisions on the Law that had authority to oblige or release people.

St. Cyprian (258 A.D.) giving a commentary on Matthew 16:18 says that Jesus *“builds the Church on one person.”* St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315 A.D.) calls Peter *“the head and the leader of the Apostles.”* According to St. Leo the Great (440 A.D), *“Only Peter was chosen out of the whole world to be the Head of all called people, of all the Apostles and of all the Fathers of the Church.”*

Peter was not first among equals—the Scriptures indicate that he possessed a primacy not only of rank and honor, but also of governing power within the Church. Jesus established Peter as the visible Head of the whole Church with the supreme power to teach and govern the faithful.

It flows from the very nature and purpose of the office given Peter by Jesus that the office be perpetuated in the Church through the successors of Peter. As the Church must be preserved through the centuries to continue its mission of salvation so also must the office, so essential to its structure, be perpetuated. This Office of Chief Shepherd is a foundation support of the Church. Jesus does not leave the sheep without a good shepherd. St. Leo the Great wrote: *“As that which Peter believed in Christ lives forever, so also that which Christ instituted in Peter lives forever.”* Philippus, at the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.), declared: *“Peter lives and ministers up to this present day, and forever, in his successors.”*

The Bishop of Rome is the successor of Simon Peter. Peter’s epistle implies that he was in Rome: *“The Church that is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings” (1Pet.5:13)*. Babylon was an early symbolic title for Rome. St. Dionysius of Corinth (170 A.D), the Roman writer Gaius (198 A.D), and Tertullian (160 A.D.) mentioned that Peter died a martyr at Rome. Gaius could point out the burial sites of Peter and Paul: *“I can point out,”* he wrote, *“the tokens of victory of the Apostles. If thou will go to the Vatican or to the Ostia Road, you will find the tokens of victory of the Apostles, who founded this Church.”* Rome alone claimed the undisputed honor of being the burial site of Peter the Apostle. St. Cyprian of Carthage (258 A.D.) referred to the Church of Rome as *“the mother and the root of the Catholic Church--the place of Peter--the Chair of Peter--the principal Church from which the episcopal unity emerged.”* When the members of the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) heard the words of St. Leo’s letter, they responded: *“Peter has spoken through Leo!”*

Without a unity of faith there can be no oneness within the Christian Community. Jesus willed for His Church to be One. He who wills an end must will the means to the end. There must be a source of right teaching within the Church, upon which Christian unity can rest. Jesus promised the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church (Mt.16:18). Eusebius Jerome (387 A.D.) said the prevailing gates of hell are especially the teachings of heretics, through which men are seduced and led to Hell. St. Bede agreed the gates of hell to be *“the evil works and foolish talk of unbelievers for they open the way to perdition.”* St. Leo the Great put these words in the mouth of Jesus as he addressed Peter: *“As I am the Inviolable Rock, as I am the corner-stone, as it is I who make both one, so also are you a rock; for you are made firm from My power, and, what relates to My authority over men is shared with you through your association with Me.”* Simon Peter as well as his successors is the Chief Shepherd appointed to guide, protect, and nourish the Christian Flock. He

must be a source of right teaching. If the Supreme Teacher of the Faith is not guarded from spreading error--if he should not possess the spirit to discern the wheat from the weed--he would not be a principal of unity but of confusion. Hell would prevail against the Church! The quality of Peter's faith caused Jesus to build His Church upon Peter. This implies the purity of his faith. Peter--through his successors--will always be a source of true faith and unity within the Church. This the Church recognized when the First Vatican Council--echoing the Councils of Constantinople (869), of Lyons (1274), and of Florence (1438)--said that the Bishop of Rome, when speaking from his office of Supreme Pastor to the entire Church, declaring a truth to be a matter of Christian Faith or Morals, cannot be in error. The same Spirit that led Peter to profess the true faith about Jesus preserves the Bishop of Rome from a false decision and leads him, by external and internal grace, to Truth.

The teachings of the early Fathers of the Church support this belief: St. Ignatius of Antioch (96 A.D.) said of the Christians of Rome: "*They are purified of every foreign color,*" that is, they are free from every false doctrine. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (140 A.D.) considered the faith of the Roman church to be the norm for the whole Church: "*With this Church, on account of its special eminence, every other Church must agree . . . in her the apostolic tradition has always been kept pure*" (*Adv. haer. III 3,2*). St. Cyprian (258 A.D.) identifies the Church at Rome "*as the teaching Chair . . . the starting point of the episcopal unity*" (*Ep.59,14*). St. Augustine holds the judgment of Pope Innocent I in the Pelagian controversy to be decisive: "*In this matter the resolutions of two councils were sent to the Apostolic Chair. Replies have arrived from these. This matter is ended. Would that the error were also ended!*" (*Sermo 131,10,10*). St. Peter Chrysologus (449 A.D.) encourages the priest Eutyches to submit his judgment to the Bishop of Rome: "*For the Holy Peter, who lives on in his episcopal chair and is its director, offers the true belief to them that seek it.*" St. Maximus, Bishop of Turin (662 A.D), beheld this unique symbolism in Peter's first miracle: "*If therefore Peter is the rock upon which the church is built, rightly does he first heal feet, that as he holds firm the foundation of the Church, so in the case of this man he gives strength to the foundations of his members. Fittingly, I say, does he first cure the feet of a Christian, so that no longer anxious, no longer feeble, he may stand upon the rock of the Church, and strong and robust may walk.*"

The Popes do not literally breathe infallibility. They have rarely spoken as such (twice in over a hundred years). The Pope can give his opinion on matters, he can speak as a Christian theologian, and even as Bishop of Rome,

and his teachings need not be considered infallible teachings on matters of faith and morals. (The Pope does have many hats!) For the Bishop of Rome to speak infallibly, the matter defined must be one essential to Christian Faith or Morals. He must solemnly declare, as Chief Shepherd of the Church--the Successor of St. Peter (from the Chair of Peter--*ex cathedra*), this teaching to the entire Church. He must intend to oblige in faith the entire Church, and this must be clear from the words used or the circumstances. When all three of these conditions have been fulfilled, the Successor of Peter has spoken infallibly.

There were Twelve Tribes of Israel and twelve heads of these tribes, but the Twelve Tribes formed one Church with Moses as its head. There were Twelve Apostles, but not twelve heads of the One Church. The Lord did not create a twelve-headed body. The Body of the Faithful has One Head--Jesus Christ, and one visible representative of Jesus Christ on earth--the Bishop of Rome, the Vicar of Christ. Men had their say about Christ in His day, and they have their say about the Bishop of Rome today. But, the faithful of the Catholic Church confess that Pope John Paul II--264th successor of Simon Peter-- is the Vicar of Christ on earth! To him, in a most particular way, are these words of Jesus addressed: "*He who hears you, hears Me. He who rejects you, rejects Me*"(Lk.10:16); "*Thou art Peter and upon this Rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it!*" For nearly two thousand years the rains have fallen and the floods have come and winds have blown and beat upon that house, but it has not failed, for it is founded upon Rock.

**LESSON TWELVE**  
**ON A ROCK FOUNDATION**

- 1. What does the root meaning of “church” signify?**
- 2. What purpose does the visible leader of a society serve?**
- 3. How does Acts present Peter in the early Christian Community?**
- 4. What were some of the major decisions of Peter?**
- 5. What does Matthew 18:17 tell us about authority in the early Church?**
- 6. What does Matthew 16:13-19 teach us?**
- 7. What is signified by changing Simon’s name to “Peter”?**
- 8. When did Jesus actually declare Peter to be Chief Shepherd?**
- 9. What is signified by Peter receiving the “keys”?**
- 10. Why is it essential that the office of Peter be perpetuated in the Church?**
- 11. Why is the Bishop of Rome acknowledged to be the successor of St. Peter?**
- 12. What special grace was given to Peter and his successors?**
- 13. What is meant by the infallibility of the Pope?**
- 14. What conditions are necessary in order for a declaration to be infallible?**

**If you have any Questions on this lesson, please list them below.**

## CHAPTER 13

### BREAD FROM HEAVEN

Saint Luke implies that between the time of the temptations of Jesus in the desert and His Passion, Jesus and His disciples were free of temptation from Satan. This period ended for Jesus and the Church at the Passion with the return of Satan. Luke ties together the return of Satan and the institution of the Holy Eucharist by Jesus at the Last Supper. The Eucharist appears to be instituted for the period of conflict now beginning for the disciples of Jesus. As Elijah, exhausted by the trials of his prophetic mission and on the verge of despair, is refreshed and strengthened by bread of heaven to walk forty days through the desert to Mt. Sinai where he encounters God, so the disciples will find in the Eucharist--the Body and Blood of Jesus--the power to persevere in Christian Discipleship. Despite the frustrations and hardship of remaining committed to Jesus Christ in a world under the power of the Evil One, the Eucharist strengthens the Son of Man. The Sacrament of the Eucharist replaces the Presence of the historical Jesus, for it truly contains Jesus, the source of grace, Himself. In this Sacrament a disciple finds the strength and protection of the Risen Savior. It is forever the sacrament of Faith, for belief in it implies belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. A frequent and worthy reception of the Eucharist ensures perseverance in the Faith: *“He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day”*(Jn.6:54).

The constant teaching of the Catholic Church for over nineteen hundred years has been that the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ is truly and substantially present, under the appearance of bread and wine, in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. It is understandable then, why the reception of the Eucharist is called Holy Communion. Today, many Christians do not hold this belief. The diverse opinions among them reflect the diversity of ideas held by the Protestant reformers. Luther admitted the Real Presence of Jesus but only during the celebration of Holy Communion. Zwingli denied the Real Presence, and he declared the bread and wine to be merely symbols of the Body and Blood--Holy Communion only being a commemoration of our Redemption. John Calvin took a middle path. He rejected the substantial presence of the Body and Blood of Christ but accepted a presence of power.

Calvin held that through the use of the bread and wine, a power proceeding from the transfigured Body of Christ in Heaven is conferred on the predestined, and this power nourishes souls. John Wycliffe taught that bread and wine remain after the consecration. He asserted that the faithful received the Body and Blood of Christ only in a spiritual manner, and he held the adoration of the Eucharist to be idolatry. Against these teachings, the Catholic Church confirmed at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the Council of Constance (1418), and the Council of Trent (1545), that the faithful truly receive in Holy Communion, under the appearance of bread and wine, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Eucharist, without a doubt, is one of the essential doctrines of Catholic Faith. This teaching is a divine mystery and cannot be estimated according to sense experience or the ordinary laws of nature. Evidence from the life of Jesus, such as walking on the water, emerging from a sealed tomb, and His appearance to the Apostles in a sealed and locked room, testify that the Body of Christ exceeded the ordinary powers of a human body, yet remaining a human body. It is the Risen Savior the communicant receives in Holy Communion. Saint Paul teaches that the resurrected body is completely transformed. He speaks of the human body becoming “spiritualized” (*pneumatized*)--as different from its former state as a flower is from its seed. To say the Risen Body of Jesus is “spiritualized” does not imply that Jesus is only a spirit, but “spiritualized” refers to the transformed condition of His human body. It is this spiritualized Body of Christ that now gives life through the Eucharist (Jn.6:63).

We find the earliest scripture reference to the Eucharist in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, written around the year 50 A.D. Paul warns about eating food sacrificed to idols. He argues that such food is offered to demons, and by eating the sacrificed food, one communicates with demons. Paul implies such to be unthinkable for a Christian who communicates with Jesus Himself through the Eucharist. Paul writes:

*Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?  
And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ? . . .  
You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons.  
You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and likewise the table of  
demons. Do we mean to provoke the Lord to jealous anger?  
(1Cor.10:16,21-22).*



*I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new Covenant in My blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord (and forgiveness of sins) until He comes! This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself. That is why many among you are sick and infirm, and why so many are dying. (1Cor.11:23-30).*

Paul plainly states that the early Church believed in the Real Presence of Jesus in "the Lord's Supper." Paul implies unworthy participation results in a falling away from the Lord.

The words of the institutions of the Eucharist are found likewise in the Gospel accounts of Matthew (26:26-28), Mark (14:22-24), and Luke (22:15-20). The last Gospel account to be written, that of John, clearly teaches the true nature and effects of the Holy Eucharist. Here, Jesus tells the Jews that He is the Bread from Heaven:

*"I Myself am the living bread come down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." At this the Jews quarreled among themselves saying, "How can He give us His flesh to eat?" Thereupon Jesus said to them, "Let me solemnly assure you; if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood real drink. The man who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him . . . the man who feeds on Me will have life because of Me" (Jn.6:51-57).*

The language of Jesus is extremely clear and forceful. The words do not encourage a symbolic interpretation but stress that the Body is real food and

the Blood real drink. The Greek word used for “feeds” is quite realistic, implying to “munch, gnaw, chew.” In the language of the Bible the figurative expression to eat a person’s flesh and blood meant to persecute him in a bloody way, to destroy him (Ps.27:2; Is.9:18; Mi.3:3). Jesus could not have intended a figurative but a realistic interpretation. His hearers certainly understood his words in a realistic manner: *“This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?”*(Jn.6:60).

When Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus, Our Lord corrected him. This time Jesus does not. We are told *“from this time on, many of His disciples broke away and would not remain in his company any longer”*(Jn.6:66). Jesus does not call them back and tell them there has been a misunderstanding. Rather He turns to the Twelve: *“Do you want to leave me too?”* Simon Peter gave the only answer a true disciple can give before the mystery of the Eucharist: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that You are God’s holy one”*(Jn6:67-69).

Indeed, true disciples of Jesus, through the centuries, have endured His words and taken them seriously. In the Didache, written between 100-140 A.D., we find this warning: *“Let no one eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord.”* Around 150 A.D., we find this description of Christian worship given by St. Justin Martyr:

*When the President has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each one present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which thanks has been pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry a portion. And among us this food is called the Eucharist; of which no one is allowed to partake but the one who believes that the things we teach are true, and who has also been washed with the washing that is for the forgiveness of sins and unto regeneration, and who is living as Christ has taught us. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but as Jesus Christ our Savior. . . . We have been taught, that the food which is consecrated by the prayer of His words, and by which our own flesh and blood is nourished, is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus who became Flesh and Blood.”*

St. Ambrose, born in 333 A.D., writes: *“But perhaps you will say: My bread is ordinary bread. On the contrary, this bread is bread only before the words of the sacred rite. When the consecration has been added, from being bread it becomes the Body of Christ.”*

How can that which is bread be the Body of Christ? By consecration. Consecration by what words; by whose words? Those of the Lord Jesus. For all the other words which are said previous to this are said by the priest: the praises that are offered to God, the prayer that is offered for the congregation, for rulers, and for others. But when the moment comes to consecrate the venerable sacrament, the priest will no longer use his own words, but will use the words of Christ. It is therefore the Word of Christ that consecrates this sacrament. Who is the Word of Christ? Who but He by whom all things were made: "*He spoke, and they were made. He commanded, and they were created*"(Ps.148:5). St. John Chrysostom (b. 344 A.D.) writes: "*We, who minister, hold but the place of servants; it is He who consecrates, He who changes them.*" St. Ephraim who lived around 306 A.D., encourages Christians:

*Partake of the Immaculate Body and Blood of Your Lord with fullest faith; certain that you are receiving wholly the Lamb Itself. The mysteries of Christ are an immortal fire. Take care you do not rashly search into them, lest you be burned partaking of them . . . .He has given us who are clothed in flesh, fire, and spirit to eat and to drink; namely, His own Body and Blood.*

Let us conclude the thoughts of the early Fathers of the Church with these beautiful words of St. Cyprian who lived around 258 A.D.:

*When we have drunk the saving Cup of the Lord's Blood, the memory of the former man in us is put aside, and there comes a forgetfulness of our former worldly way of life, and the breast that was heavy and sad and oppressed by its tormenting sins is set free in the joy of the divine compassion; for if that which he drinks contains the Reality of the Lord, he may then indeed rejoice, drinking in the midst of the Church of the Lord.*

It is a consolation and strengthening of faith when we behold the fidelity of the Catholic teachings to the Sacred Scriptures and the interpretations of those Scriptures given by the early saints of the Church.

## **LESSON THIRTEEN**

### **BREAD OF HEAVEN**

- 1. In what way does the Holy Eucharist replace the Presence of the historical Jesus?**
- 2. Why do you think the Eucharist is called the “Sacrament of Christ”?**
- 3. Why is the Eucharist called “Holy Communion”?**
- 4. How would you express the Catholic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist?**
- 5. In a general way what does St. Paul teach about the Lord’s Supper?**
- 6. To what does St. Paul attribute the weakness and infirmity of some Church members?**
- 7. What three conditions did St. Justin mention for the reception of the Eucharist?**
- 8. According to both Saints Justin and Ambrose, what causes the bread and wine to be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ?**
- 9. According to St. John Chrysostom, what is the role of the minister in the Eucharist?**
- 10. According to St. Cyprian, what are the effects of receiving the Holy Eucharist?**

**If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.**

## CHAPTER 14

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURES

#### PART ONE: IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Christian Faith is a divine gift, and all do not possess it in the same degree. Jesus complained of His disciples: *“How weak your faith is!”*(Mt.16:8). *“How little faith you have!”*(Mt.8:26). To another person Jesus said: *“Woman, you have great faith!”*(Mt.15:28). He said to others: *“Your faith has been your salvation”*(Lk.7:50). *“Your faith has healed you”*(Lk.18:42). The measure of one’s response to the Christian revelation depends upon the degree of one’s faith. Faith is the measure of a Christian. Paul complained of the Corinthians: *“Brothers, the trouble was that I could not talk to you as spiritual men but only as infants in Christ”*(1Cor.3:1). Paul advised the Christian: *“Let him estimate himself soberly, in keeping with the measure of faith that God has apportioned him”*(Rom.12:3). *“The use of one’s gifts should not go beyond the proportion of one’s faith”*(Rom.12:6). Paul encourages: *“Use the faith you have as your rule of life in the sight of God”*(Rom.14:22). He reminds Christians: *“Whatever does not accord with one’s belief is sinful”*(Rom.14:23).

As Catholic Christians we offer no apology for our faith in the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of the *Risen* Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine, and for our adoration of the “Host.” Our beliefs are in proportion to our gift of faith. These beliefs are an essential part of our “rule of life in the sight of God.” In keeping with the measure of faith that God has “apportioned” to us, we believe the literal words of the Scriptures concerning the “*Lord’s Supper.*” However, since the Scriptures admonish us to “*Guard the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us*”(2Tim.1:14), and “*Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully*”(1Pt.3:15-16), we patiently seek to give an explanation of our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the “*Lord’s Supper.*”

The first scriptural reference to the doctrine appears in one of the most ancient and authentic New Testament Scriptures--St. Paul’s *First Letter to the Corinthians*. Paul wrote the letter less than twenty-five years after the death of

Jesus, and some years before the written gospels appeared. Like the dawning light of a new day, the doctrine's first appearance is delicate and mysterious, but as we follow its progress through the Scriptures, it comes to shine brightly as the noonday sun.

We first discover in Corinthians a mere intimation of a Christian liturgical celebration related to the Jewish feast of Passover when Paul writes: "*Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*"(1Cor.5:7-8).

Here Paul is primarily appealing for Christians to live a holy life, but the text also suggests a concept was alive in the Community recognizing the sacrificial aspects of Jesus' death, and symbolically beholding him as a paschal lamb. Every year at Passover, in the temple area, lambs were slain and eaten by Jewish families during the Passover meal. This feast commemorated the night Jewish families were saved from death by the blood of the lamb that marked the doorways of their homes when the destroying angel passed through Egypt killing the first-born in every home.

Paul turns to the history of the Jews to discourage idolatry among the Corinthians. He compares the spiritual gifts received by Israel to those received by the Christian Community. He points out that although Israel received a baptism and, while in the desert, received spiritual food and drink, many died in the desert due to idolatry. He surprisingly relates the "*spiritual drink*" to Christ. He writes: "*They drank from the spiritual rock that was following them, and the rock was Christ*"( Cor.10:4). This daily food and drink was actually manna and water. However, Paul speaks of it as "spiritual" food and drink. These texts (1Cor. 10:1-4) imply Christians also receive a baptism and partake of a spiritual food and drink. What is this spiritual food and drink of Christians? We soon discover the answer.

As a deterrent to idolatry Paul asks: "*Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ?*"(1Cor.10:16. The expected answer would be "Yes!" This text implies that Christians are sharing, through some means, in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. This is our first obvious reference to a Christian liturgical service and it answers the question, "What is the Christian food and drink?" It is "the blood of Christ" and "the body of Christ."

*“The cup of blessing”* has a Semitic ring, *kos sel berakah*, and reflects liturgical use. No doubt, it refers to the *“cup of blessing”* of the Passover meal. The word here for bread, *artos*, describes bread in a flat, round pancake-like shape. Both this type of bread and the words *“the bread we break”* recall the Passover meal. At the Passover meal the host broke the bread and passed a piece to each person at the table. This signified the meal had begun. In the Semitic world, to dine together had sacred implications. It implied a union of hearts and spirits and the cementing of friendships among those eating together.

The bread broken is identified as the *“body of Christ.”* There is a strong implication that those participating in such a liturgical celebration would commune with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. They would become one person in Christ. The *“breaking of the bread”* signifies that union with Jesus had begun. Paul writes: *“because the loaf of bread is one (Christ), we (the Christian community), many though we are, are one body (Church), for we all partake of the one loaf (Christ)”*(1Cor.10:17).

Ancient peoples, both Jews and pagans, believed that sharing in a sacrificial banquet resulted in a divine union. Through the eating of the sacrificial victim, a real union occurred between the person to whom the victim was offered and the persons sharing in the sacrificial meal. Paul indicates this to be a Jewish belief when he says: *“Look at Israel . . . and see if those who eat the sacrifices do not share in the altar!”*(1Cor.10:18). To share in the altar implies union with the God of the altar. It implies sitting at the table with Yahweh. In the Christian celebration the implication is that Jesus is both the victim on the altar and the sacrificial food received at the table of the Lord. What depth of union would this signify between Jesus and the communicants?

Paul leaves no doubt that a real union occurs in these communions. He wrote: *“. . . Gentiles sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to become sharers with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons . . . . Do we mean to provoke the Lord to jealous anger?”*(1Cor. 10:20-22). This implies these communions to be real unions, on the one hand with demons and on the other hand with the Lord.

Up to this point Paul intimated that the Christian Community possessed supernatural means of salvation. He implied a sacrificial meal existed in the Church that could be compared with similar rites of the Jews and pagans. In this Christian rite a real sharing in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ occurred, which effects a bond of union not only with Christ, but between members of the Church. Now Paul identifies and describes this Christian rite as the *“Lord’s Supper.”* The explanation occurred as a result of certain abuses in the Corinthian community affecting the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Paul confesses that the revelation he shares comes from the Lord. It comes down through the Christian Community from Jesus Himself. He writes:

*I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way, after the supper, He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes!” (1Cor.11:23-26).*

This teaches us that the rite of the Lord’s Supper was inaugurated by Jesus the night before his death; it is re-enacted within the Christian Community because Jesus commanded it to be so. This rite proclaims the act of redemption. It does so because those who participate within this ritual actually experience this saving event by personally being introduced into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A Christian is united to God through Jesus Christ. Union with God is through the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. In this religious rite the Body of Jesus is really present. We have four accounts of this rite in the New Testament. None of them leave room for a merely symbolic interpretation. The manner in which the bread and wine are the Body of Jesus Christ is indeed a mystery of faith.

Paul’s belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Christian rite is dramatically substantiated when he writes: *“This means that whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself. That is why many among you are sick and*



*infirm, and why so many are dying*”(1Cor.11:27-30). This implies that Paul attributes dramatic effects to the reception of this Holy Communion. This could hardly be stated about a rite only of symbolic nature.

In the Christian Community this rite is referred to as the Holy Eucharist. The name comes from the fact that all four scriptural accounts begin with the “*breaking of the bread*” and giving “*thanks.*” Both these expressions become terms symbolizing the ritual of the Lord’s Supper. The Greek word for “*thanks*” was *eucharistein*. It is a very rich word for it expresses the proper conduct of one who is the recipient of a gift; it expresses not only a thankful attitude but one that gives an outward expression of gratitude. The Lord’s Supper is usually referred to as the Holy Eucharist.

When it comes to Scripture scholars’ analysis of these particular scriptural passages, some of the explanations could only be surpassed by a scientific analysis of the Theory of Relativity. Elaborate theories are developed, all in order to deny the simple truth conveyed in the written words. Paul was not writing to astute theologians; he was not writing to Jews trained in the rabbinical schools of speculation; he was not even writing to mature Christian men and women, but as he himself said: “*Brothers, the trouble was that I could not talk to you as spiritual men but only as men of flesh, as infants in Christ . . . . You are not ready for it even now*”(1Cor.3:1,2). He was speaking to “*spiritual infants,*” and “*my message and my preaching had none of the persuasive force of ‘wise’ argumentation*”(1Cor.2:4). As his own words tell us, Paul plainly and simply spoke to the Corinthians. There was no need to search out hidden meanings or make speculative interpretations.

Not many scholars have been as intellectually honest as the renowned Protestant biblical scholar Rudolf Bultmann who readily admitted that Paul and the early Church attributed marvelous powers to the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. However, Bultmann judges from the foundation of his own theological sophistication that these “*primitive*” beliefs smack of the “*magical*” and are not tenable today. Even if one cannot admire the quality of his faith, at least his intellectual honesty must be admired and admitted as a refreshing change from so many others.

Men have gone to extremes in order not to accept the realism expressed in Christ’s words over the bread and wine. Why? Those words challenge a man’s faith to believe that God would deal so simplistically with human beings--that the Lord would insist man put that quality of faith in the Word.

Can the Word, who made the universe, insist that man believe that the same Word now makes bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? The answer one gives to that question can measure the portion of one's faith in the Word.

Our next article will deal with the Holy Eucharist in the Gospels.

## LESSON FOURTEEN

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURES

#### PART ONE: IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

1. About when did St. Paul write First Corinthians?
2. What do Paul's words in 1 Cor. 5:7-8 intimate about the death of Jesus?
3. What reason does Paul give for Christians not to participate in idol offerings?
4. What would be the spiritual food and drink of the Christian Community?
5. According to 1 Cor. 10:17, what would be one of the effects of reception of the Holy Eucharist?
6. What did Paul see as the sacrificial meal in the Christian Community?
7. To whom did Paul attribute his teaching on the Lord's Supper?
8. Why does the Christian Community re-enact the Lord's Supper?
9. What words of Paul emphasize his own belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist?
10. What two expressions in the early Christian Community symbolized the Eucharist?
11. What is the meaning of the word "Eucharist"?
12. What is the main reason for disbelief in the Holy Eucharist?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 15

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

#### PART TWO: IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

As we turn to the four gospels to examine the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist, we find in all four accounts a relationship of the Last Supper to the Jewish feast of Passover. Apparently this Jewish feast throws much light upon the significance of the Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper. This aspect of the Eucharist we will examine in a later article. However, at this point of our study we need to keep in mind the distinction between the divinely revealed belief (the Real Presence), any theological interpretation of that belief (Transubstantiation), and a pious devotion springing from the theological interpretation of the belief (genuflecting before the Eucharist). These are different aspects of the Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist, and they concern different aspects of our faith response.

As Catholics, we must believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as a divinely revealed truth. However, we do not accept with the same quality of faith the theological interpretations and speculations of theologians on the doctrine of the Eucharist. How Jesus is really present in the Eucharist is a mystery theologians seek to explain. We may have to accept, on the teaching authority of the Church, that certain theological interpretations and pious practices are in disagreement or incompatible with the revealed doctrine. In this area we are free to accept or reject many theological opinions and pious practices. For a precise understanding of the Catholic Doctrine on the Eucharist we need to keep these distinctions in mind. Later we will see how those theological interpretations and pious practices enlighten and clarify our belief.

The Real Presence is an object of Catholic Faith because the doctrine has been divinely revealed both through the Sacred Scriptures and through the constant teaching of the Church from its beginning at Pentecost to this present day. We find much of the Pentecostal Faith of the Church recorded in the New Testament. We have already reviewed the Doctrine of the Eucharist as it appeared in First Corinthians, written within twenty-five years of

Pentecost. We will now turn our attention to the doctrine of the Eucharist as it appears in the four Gospels, written some years later than First Corinthians.

In the three Synoptic Gospels of Mark (14:22-25), Matthew (26:26-29), and Luke (22:14-20), we find three accounts similar to Paul's presentation of the Eucharist in First Corinthians (11:23-30). The similarity of these four accounts indicates how well the memory of the Lord's Supper survived within the oral tradition of the Church. It likewise suggests the importance of this ritual within Christian worship. As we have seen from the study of First Corinthians, it was part of early Christian worship. Scholars believe the accounts in Mark and Matthew reflect the worship of the Jerusalem Community, and the accounts in Luke and Paul reflect the worship of the Antioch Community. The major distinction between these two sets of accounts would be that we find in the accounts of Luke and Paul the addition of the words: "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*" These words imply Jesus commanded the perpetuation of this ritual within the Church.

All four accounts clearly indicate the doctrine of the Real Presence. *By the power of the Word*, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord. The words of the Scriptures do not allow for a merely symbolic interpretation. Jesus did *not* say: "*This bread is My Body.*" Rather He said: "*Take this—this is My Body. This is My Blood*"(Mk.14:22-24). The use of the demonstrative pronoun "*this*" without the nouns "*bread*" and "*wine*" signifies that what Jesus held in His hand was no longer bread and wine. What was in His hand then? What He held in His hand Jesus identified as "*My Body,*" "*My Blood.*" . . . We who believe in His Word can only say, "*Amen!*"

Nothing in the narrative indicates figurative language is being used. If we take the words spoken at face value, we must confess they reveal the Real Presence of Jesus. Even if we look at the words in the general context of the Scriptures, we must confess nothing argues for a figurative interpretation. Paul maintains what he had written had been plainly and clearly spoken: "*There are no hidden meanings in our letters besides what you can read for yourselves and understand*"(2Cor.1:13).

Many biblical scholars believe that the last gospel account, written by John, appeared in final form as late as 90 A.D. It reflected a very developed Christian Faith. We find no account of the institution of the Eucharist within the Fourth Gospel. However the entire sixth chapter is Eucharist-oriented. It deals with the preparation, presentation, and reaction to the doctrine. John

sets the theme by telling us: *“The Jewish feast of Passover was near”*(Jn.6:4). In preparation for the feast, the reading within the synagogue would have been from Isaiah, which painted for the Jews vivid dreams about the Messiah and the coming Messianic Age. There was a popular expectation that the Messiah would come at Passover, and that manna would fall again from heaven at Passover. John now relates that Jesus multiplied a few barley loaves and fishes and fed over five thousand people. The people spontaneously reacted: *“This is undoubtedly the Prophet who is to come into the world”*(Jn.6:14). Jesus fled because He realized they desired to make Him a political king. This was a profession of faith in Jesus, but an inadequate one. It beheld Jesus only as a holy man. In the next recorded scene the divinity of Jesus is intimated by His walking upon the water and identifying Himself to His disciples with the divine title *“I Am [ego eimi]”* (Jn.6:20).

The following day Jesus encountered the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum. In the dialogue that followed, Jesus revealed Himself to be the real bread from heaven. This implied His divine origin and that He was the real bread to nourish the souls of men unto eternal life. Up to this point the discourse implied the necessity of faith in the divinity of Jesus for salvation. The Jews reacted negatively and murmured because *“He claimed, ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven’”*(Jn.6:41). They rejected his claim *“to have come down from heaven.”*

Jesus does not dodge the issue but presses the point: *“I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world”*(Jn.6:51). If the discourse stopped here, the interpretation would be that faith in the divinity and death of Jesus brings eternal life. However, the discourse does not stop here. The words of Jesus go on to demand a degree of faith in Him and union with Him that exceeds the bounds of human expectations. At this point we are told the Jews *“quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can He give us His flesh to eat?’”*(Jn.6:52). The Greek word for “quarrel” suggests a bitter dispute. The Jews took Jesus’ words to have a literal meaning. Earlier, when Nicodemus took Jesus literally about being born again, Jesus clarified His meaning as being spiritually reborn. If the Jews at Capernaum misunderstood Jesus’ words, He had an obligation to clarify the meaning of His words. Jesus does clarify His meaning. The clarification graphically reinforces the literal meaning of the words. *“Thereupon Jesus said to them: ‘Let Me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal,*

*and I will raise him up on the last day.”* The Greek word *trogen*, translated “feeds,” is a very strong word, indicating eating in a realistic fashion. John uses the word to emphasize the realism of the Eucharistic flesh and blood.

Jesus goes on to say: “*For my flesh is real food and my blood is read drink*”(Jn.6:55). The use of the Greek word *alethes*, translated as “real,” leaves no room for figurative interpretation. It expresses the genuine value of His flesh and blood as food and drink.

It is impossible to understand these verses without a reference to the Eucharist! The famous Protestant biblical scholar, Rudolph Bultmann, writes, “*These verses refer without any doubt to the sacramental meal of the Eucharist, where the flesh and blood of the ‘Son of Man’ are consumed, with the result that this food gives ‘eternal life,’ in the sense that the participants in the meal can be assured of the future resurrection.*”

In verses 35-50 belief in Jesus is the main theme. This belief culminates and is perfected in verses 51-58, where the exclusive theme is that eternal life results from eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is no longer the Father who gives life but the Son who has life in Himself. A new vocabulary is introduced: “*eat,*” “*drink,*” “*flesh,*” “*blood.*” There is no doubt the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is intended, with the emphasis on feeding upon the flesh of Jesus and drinking His blood. The only favorable meaning that can be given to such expression is the one found within the doctrine of the Eucharist. To *eat someone’s flesh*, figuratively and poetically, expresses hatred in the Scriptures. In the Aramaic tradition, the devil is referred to as “*eater of flesh.*” The drinking of blood was forbidden by Law (Lv.3:17; Dt.12:23). The language is so powerful that it precludes any figurative interpretation or any over-spiritualizing of Holy Communion.

Whereas verses 35-50 stress the necessity of belief in Jesus, the Eucharistic insert emphasizes the necessity of eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Jesus. Here, back-to-back, we have demonstrated the two-fold Presence of Jesus: in the living Word preached by the Church, and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It makes clear that the gift of life comes through a believing reception of the Eucharist. We find echoes of these same two truths in Luke’s episode of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: “*Were not our hearts burning inside us as He talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?*” (Lk.24:32). And, “*Then they recounted what had happened on the road and how they had come to know Him in the breaking of the bread*”(Lk.24:35).

It is only logical for men to deny the Eucharist if they cannot accept the divinity of Jesus. One gives birth to the other. What were men's responses to this doctrine? *"This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?"* Jesus was fully aware that his disciples were murmuring in protest at what He had said: *"Does it shake your faith?' He asked them"* (Jn.6:60-61). The importance of faith in Jesus is demonstrated by his invitation to his Apostles to leave if they cannot have faith in His word. Their understanding of the mysteries revealed was no better than that of others, but their love of God was genuine and so was their faith. Peter gave the only response a human can give in the face of divine truth: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that You are God's holy one"*(Jn.6:68-69). Peter spoke for the Twelve--all but one. One did not believe. Chapter six closes with a tragic echo from the Last Supper: *"Did I not choose Twelve of you Myself? Yet one of you is a devil"*(Jn.6:70). Just in case we should miss the point, John gives a little reminder: *"He was talking about Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was going to hand Jesus over"*(Jn.6:71). From the beginning to the end, Chapter Six is Eucharistic!

We are told the mark of the antichrist is 666. Out of the entire New Testament there is only *one verse* that appears with that enumeration, and it refers to those who do not believe in the Word made Flesh: *"From this time on, many of His disciples broke away and would not remain in His company longer"*(Jn.6:66). The Scriptures confirm: *"Many false prophets have appeared in the world . . . . Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, while every spirit that fails to acknowledge Him does not belong to God. Such is the spirit of the antichrist which, as you have heard, is to come; in fact, it is in the world already"*(1Jn.4:1-3).



## LESSON FIFTEEN

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST IN HOLY SCRIPTURES

#### PART TWO: IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

1. What does the similarity of the four written accounts of the Eucharist in the Scriptures indicate?
2. What do all four accounts emphasize?
3. What do the words spoken at the Last Supper actually indicate?
4. Can Catholics give a symbolic meaning to those words spoken at the Last Supper?
5. What does the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John deal with?
6. What did the Jews see in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes?
7. What is being symbolized in the apparition of Jesus walking on the water?
8. How did Jesus identify Himself at Capernaum? What did this imply?
9. What caused the Jews to quarrel?
10. What did Jesus do when the Jews took His words literally?
11. What words in the text argue for the literal interpretation of Jesus' words?
12. According to the words of Jesus, what is the effect of receiving His Body and Blood?
13. What is the reaction of Jesus to men's unbelief?
14. In what two ways is Jesus present within the Christian Community?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 16

### EUCHARIST IN THE EARLY CHURCH

From the dawn of Christianity, the ritual of the Lord's Supper was reenacted within the Christian Community. This is evident from Paul's written account in Chapter Eleven of First Corinthians. Luke makes reference to it in Acts when he writes that the early Christian disciples "*devoted themselves to the Apostles' instructions and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayers*"(Acts2:42). Luke implies the Church celebrated the ritual of the Lord's Supper on Sunday: "*On the first day of the week when we gathered for the breaking of bread, Paul preached to them*"(Acts20:7).

Very early within the Church "*the discipline of the secret*" was imposed; this forbade believers to reveal the Christian rituals to pagans for fear of sacrilegious imitation. All four scriptural accounts of the Lord's Supper mention that *thanks was given and the bread was broken*. The early Church referred to the ritual of the Lord's Supper as "the Eucharist" (meaning thanksgiving) and as "the breaking of bread." Both became code names of reference to the Lord's Supper.

In his Gospel account Luke implies the Risen Savior remains present within the Christian Community through two means: He is present in the words of the Scriptures and in "*the breaking of the bread.*" Luke teaches this when he relates the episode of the appearance of the Risen Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. There we read:

*When He had seated himself with them to eat, He took bread, pronounced the blessing, then broke the bread and began to distribute it to them. With that their celebration of the Lord's Supper, called the Eucharistic Celebration.*

From its conception, the Church received the gift of the Holy Spirit to direct the Church in its acceptance and understanding of Christian revelations. The Church has preserved, meditated on, and loved the Scriptures for many centuries. In its constant teachings through the centuries, the Christian Community possesses a rich reservoir of scriptural knowledge. Within Christian tradition the mustard seed of revelation has become a tree of

knowledge. The best interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures is Church Tradition. To cut oneself off from this tradition is to start all over in seeking to understand the Word of God. The Scripture warns that when the good seed is sown, the Enemy comes into the field of the mind to sow the weeds of untruths. It has been wisely said that when we forget the lessons of history, we are destined to repeat the mistakes of history. The heresies born today in independent and “non-denominational” Christian Communities only repeat the heresies confronted and rejected by the Church in its yesteryears.

When we open the Bible today, we read words once written in Hebrew or Greek. Words are signs and symbols used to express ideas. It is not always easy to determine the ideas being expressed in the words. From generation to generation the meanings of words change. When a grandmother today says she is “cool,” she means something different from when her grandson says she is “cool.” The problem of understanding is gravely compounded when the words were written over two thousand years ago, and in strange languages. In those original words of the Scriptures, written so many centuries ago in Hebrew and Greek, God communicated His will to mankind. To understand that communication, we need not only to know the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words of two thousand years ago, but also to know, to some degree, the Spirit that expressed those truths through the evangelists.

From the very first centuries of the Church, men who understood the Greek and Hebrew of the times and men filled with the Holy Spirit have sought to interpret the meaning of the Scriptures. Some of those men were actually disciples of the evangelist Saint John. Would not those men, so close to the sources of revelation, be our finest interpreters of these scriptures? Let us prudently listen to what the Holy Spirit has been saying about the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist through the early saints of the Christian Church.

One of the most famous Christians of the early Church was St. Ignatius of Antioch, a contemporary of St. John the Evangelist. Ignatius heard John preach. Ignatius died as a martyr in 110 A.D. During the life of Ignatius, John had written his gospel account. How did Ignatius interpret those words written by John: “*For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink*”? Ignatius expressed his belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He wrote in his letter to the Philadelphians:

*I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the Bread of God, which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David and for drink I desire His Blood, which is love incorruptible . . . .*

In his Letter to the Smyrnaeans, he wrote of false teachers:

*They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes . . . . It is right to shun such men, and not even to speak about them, either in public or in private.*

Forty years after the death of Ignatius, around 150 A.D., St. Justin, another famous martyr of the early church, wrote an explanation of the Christian Faith to the Emperor Antoninus Pius. In the process of describing Christian worship Justin wrote:

*We call this food Eucharist; and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration, and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not a common bread nor common drink do we receive these . . . we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharist prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, is both the flesh and blood of that incarnated Jesus.*

St. Justin not only teaches about the Real Presence but he also teaches that only a baptized Christian with a pure conscience and a believing heart could receive the Holy Eucharist.

St. Irenaeus, the second bishop of Lyons, who lived between 140 and 202 A.D., was one of the greatest teachers of the early Church. Irenaeus had been a pupil of St. Polycarp who had been taught by St. John the Evangelist. Writing against certain Christian heretics who denied the resurrection of the human body, St. Irenaeus wrote:

*If the body be not saved, then, in fact, neither is the cup of the Eucharist the partaking of His Blood nor is the Bread which we break the partaking of His body . . . . He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be His own Blood, from which He causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, He has established as His own Body, from which He gives increase to our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the Body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life--flesh which is nourished by the Body and Blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of Him?"(Against Heresies).*

St. Irenaeus not only confesses his belief in the Real Presence, but confirms the truth that our own resurrection from the dead is attributed to the reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Origen, one of the most brilliant theologians of the early Church, who lived from 185 to 253 A.D., wrote about the care some Christians had for the Eucharist but the neglect they had for the Word of God:

*I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall, and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence, but if you observe such caution in keeping His Body, and properly so, how is it that you think neglecting the word of God a lesser crime than neglecting His Body? (Homilies on Exodus).*

The deacon St. Ephriam, who lived between 306 and 373 A.D., was called "the lyre of the Holy Spirit." In one of his homilies, St. Ephriam insisted upon the Real Presence and maintained that what was done to the Eucharist was done to Jesus Christ: "He called the bread His living Body, and did Himself fill it with Himself and the Spirit . . . . But if anyone despise it or reject it or treat it with ignominy it may be taken as a certainty that he treats with ignominy the Son, who called it and actually made it to be His Body" (Homilies).

Around 348 A.D. St. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, taught that the reception of the Eucharist produces union with Christ and makes us "Christ-bearers":

*Let us, then, with full confidence, partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. For in the figure of bread His Body is given to you, and in the figure of wine His Blood is given to you, so that by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, you might become united in body and blood with Him. For thus do we become Christ-bearers, His Body and Blood being distributed through our members. And thus it is that we become, according to the blessed Peter, sharers of the divine nature.*

**St. Cyril insists that it is not through our senses but through our faith that we perceive the Real Presence:**

*Do not, therefore, regard the Bread and Wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but--be fully assured by the faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ (Mystagogic Catecheses).*

**Theodore of Mopsuestia brings us into the fifth century. Theodore was a close friend of St. John Chrysostom. He became Bishop of Mopsuestia in 383 A.D. and died in 428 A.D. Theodore attributed the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist to the power of the Holy Spirit:**

*It is proper, therefore, that when Christ gave the Bread, He did not say, "This is the symbol of My body," but, "This is My Body." In the same way when He gave the Cup He did not say, "This is the symbol of My Blood," but "This is My Blood;" for He wanted us to look upon the Eucharistic elements after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit not according to their nature, but that we should receive them as they are, the Body and Blood of our Lord. We ought not to regard the Eucharistic elements merely as bread and cup, but as the Body and Blood of Christ, into which they were transformed by the descent of the Holy Spirit (Catechetical Homilies).*

**The great St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.), in his commentary on the Psalms, explains how Jesus Christ, the Incarnated Son of God, was God's footstool to be adored:**

*The earth is the footstool of My feet . . . For He received earth from earth; because flesh is from the earth, and He took flesh from the flesh of Mary. He walked here in the same flesh, and gave us the same flesh to be eaten unto salvation. But no one eats that flesh unless first He adores it; and thus it is discovered how such a footstool of the Lord's feet is adored; and not only do we not sin by adoring, we do sin by not adoring (Psalms).*

Augustine implies Christians ought to receive the Eucharist daily:

*You ought to know what you have received, what you are going to receive, and what you ought to receive daily. The Bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the Word of God, is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ. Through that bread and wine the Lord Christ willed to commend His Body and Blood, which He poured out for us unto the forgiveness of sins. If you have received worthily, you are what you have received (Sermons).*

St. John Damascene (645-749 A.D.) was a great preacher and writer of the early Church. John died as a monk in a monastery near Jerusalem at the age of 104. John gives this explanation of how the Eucharist becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus:

*If you inquire into the way in which this happens, let it suffice for you to hear that it is through the Holy Spirit, just as it was through the Holy Spirit that the Lord took on Himself from the Holy Mother of God the flesh that subsisted in Himself. More than this we do not know, except that the word of God is true and effective and all-powerful; but the manner of the Eucharistic transformation is inscrutable . . . the bread on the credence table, as also the wine and water, through the epiclesis and coming of the Holy Spirit, are supernaturally changed into the Body of Christ and into His Blood, and they are not two but one and the same. For those who partake worthily and with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting, and a safeguard to soul and body (The Source of Knowledge).*

**In this brief history we have demonstrated what has been the constant and unchanging truth in the Christian Church. What has the Holy Spirit been saying to the churches through all these centuries through His holy saints? Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine! Many deny this truth today, but it has been the constant and unchanging teaching of the Catholic Church for nearly two thousand years. This truth is of the faith of our Fathers! We are proud to profess it and eager to defend it!**



## LESSON SIXTEEN

### EUCCHARIST IN THE EARLY CHURCH

1. What was meant by the “discipline of the secret”?
2. According to St. Luke, how did the disciples recognize Jesus within the Church?
3. What is the importance of studying the teachings of the early Fathers of the Church?
4. According to St. Irenaeus, what is one of the great effects of the Eucharist upon the human body?
5. What did Origen and St. Ephriam teach us about the care and reverence of the Holy Eucharist in the early Church?
6. According to St. Cyril, what do we become through the reception of Holy Communion?
7. How does St. Cyril say the Presence of Christ is known in the Holy Eucharist?
8. According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, how does the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ?
9. Why does St. Augustine say it is a sin not to adore the Eucharist?
10. What effect does St. John Damascene ascribe to the worthy reception of the Eucharist?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 17

### HOLY EUCHARIST AND THEOLOGY - PART I

The Acts of the Apostles describe Christians in the first years of church life as *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”*(Acts2:42). The temple liturgy continued to be their public worship while the Eucharist, *“the breaking of the bread”* became the focal point of their Christian lives. We read: *“They took of the food with great joy and simplicity of heart.”* When Saint Anselm wrote, *“I believe that I may know,”* he implied our faith leads us to true knowledge. Because the early Christians believed in the words of Jesus, they came to know the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. From the time of the Last Supper the Christian Community believed the Eucharist truly contained the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 A.D.) wrote: *“Once at Cana in Galilee, by a mere nod, He changed water into wine and is it now incredible that He changes wine into blood?”* (Cat. Myst.4,2).

The early Fathers of the Church attributed the Eucharist both to the power of Christ’s words over the bread and wine and to the power of the Holy Spirit. Tertullian (155-240 A.D.) wrote: *“He took bread, offered it to His disciples and made it into His body by saying: ‘This is my body!’”* (Adv. Marc. IV, 40). St. Cyril of Jerusalem taught: *“Having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual songs of praise, we invoke the good God to send down the Holy Spirit on these gifts, so that He might make the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ. For that which the Holy Spirit has touched is completely sanctified and transmuted”* (Cat. Myst. 5,7).

Although Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, we know that after the words of consecration—*“This is my Body . . . This is my Blood”*--no visible or sensible change occurs in the bread and wine now changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. To sight, to touch, to taste, all remains the same. To the senses the Eucharist still appears to be bread and wine. *“I believe that I may know!”* Only the eye of faith beholds the Real Presence. Faith in the Eucharist professes faith in the Word of God. St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.), taught:

*“Thus what you see is bread and a chalice; your own eyes tell you that. But what your faith must learn is this: the bread is the body of Christ, the chalice is the blood of Christ” (Sermo 272). St. John Damascene (645-749 A.D.) has told us: “More than this we do not know, except that the word of God is true and effective and all-powerful, but the manner of the Eucharist transformation is inscrutable.” St. John goes on to confess that the bread and wine “are supernaturally changed into the Body of Christ and into His Blood, and they are not two but one and the same.”*

The doctrine of the Eucharist finds support from other incidents in the life of Jesus Christ. In His physical body Jesus walked upon water; He emerged bodily from a sealed tomb; and He bodily entered into an enclosed and locked room. These occurrences attest that the ordinary mode of bodily existence can be altered by divine power without the body ceasing to be truly a human body. The Eucharist has truly been called the “Mystery of Faith,” and it is indeed the stumbling block for many on the road to faith in Jesus Christ: *“How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (Jn.6:52).*

The doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist has been the subject of centuries of theological reflection. It is the work of Christian theologians, through human reason, to penetrate into the mysteries of divine revelation in order to interpret and explain the mysteries as far as possible. The Church owes much to the work of Christian theologians for our advancement in our understanding of divine revelation. However we must keep in mind there is a distinction between a revealed truth and an interpretation or explanation of that divine mystery. Often it requires a greater exercise of faith to accept the theological explanation than to accept the doctrine itself. We often fail to distinguish between the two. In such cases there can be the danger of throwing out the baby with the bath water. We need to clearly distinguish the baby from the bath water--the revealed truth from its theological explanations. In the case of the Holy Eucharist we need to keep separate the fact of the Real Presence and the theological explanations that describe the manner and mode by which Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist.

Theologians often arrive at contradictory conclusions. Their teachings are often divisive within the Christian Community. The human spirit easily becomes a prey to pride. A theologian can be tempted to equate his conclusion

on par with the dogma itself--holding his conclusions to be the only possible interpretation. Such men often attract large numbers of believers and with the result a Christian sect is formed within the Church to the detriment of Church unity. Precisely for this reason a teaching authority exists within the Church. From the very beginning there has existed a ministry, an office of authoritative teaching within the Church. To the chosen Apostles Jesus said:

*“As the Father has sent Me, so I send you” (Jn.20:21).*

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations . . . Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world” (Mt.28:19,20).*

*“He that hears you, hears me” (Lk.10:16).*

The final decision on theological teachings, on this earth, rests with the teaching authority of the Church residing today in its bishops, and in the Bishop of Rome in a particular manner. It is the obligation of this ministry to bless or condemn theological teachings as these teachings either uphold or undermine Christian truths. Pope Pius XII instructed theologians that our formulas of faith in which Christian dogma are expressed *“are not tied to a certain form of human culture, or to a specific phase of scientific progress or to one or the other theological school” (Human generis-N.24)*. The object of Christian Faith transcends the human and earthly and so ought the formulas expressing the faith.

When St. John Damascene wrote that *“the manner of the Eucharist transformation is inscrutable,”* he maintained that through a supernatural manner, the “form” of bread and wine had become the “form” of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. He spoke of a “transformation” having occurred. The very use of the word “transformation” implies a theological explanation of the Holy Eucharist. Perhaps we may better understand the concept “transformation” by examining an example from Paul’s letter to the Romans. Paul wrote: *“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . .” (Rom. 12:2a)*. The expression “be conformed” has as its root the word *schema* which refers to the outward surface of things--that dimension of a being that constantly changes. The expression “be transformed” has as its root *morphe* that signifies the inner being of reality--

that unchanging element of being called its “nature.” The *schema* of a being can constantly change while the *morphe* remains constant. A man does not have the same *schema* at 17 as at 70, but he possesses the same *morphe*. To change the *morphe* is to change the nature of a being. In the Roman text Paul encourages Christians not to be constantly changing the surface of their lives by conforming to the moral fashions of this world, but to change their very inner natures. He demands a radical change expressed by the concept *metamorphose*--translated, “be transformed.” Paul maintains that a metamorphism occurs in baptism in which a Christian becomes a “new creation” in which “all is new.” However at baptism the outward appearance does not change--the human *schema* remains the same. A Christian must accept his “new creation” on faith. Baptism has caused a radical change--a transformation-- but not a change in the external *schema*.

We have an interesting use of the word *morphe* in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians. Paul wrote of Jesus Christ “*being in the form (morphe) of God . . . took upon him the form (morphe) of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion (schema) as a man.*” Here we are told that Jesus Christ possessed the natures of God and man. Here there is *no* transformation. The two natures are united in the One Person. However, the surface appearance of Jesus Christ (His *schema*) was that of the human being and not that of a divine being. To the human eye Jesus Christ appears only as a man.

When St. John Damascene writes “*the manner of the Eucharist transformation is inscrutable,*” he professes that the *morphe* of bread and wine has been changed, in some inscrutable manner, into the *morphe* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. However the *schema* of the bread and wine remain while the *schema* of Jesus Christ cannot be seen. Therefore, we no longer have the natures of bread and wine present, but the true nature of Jesus Christ. Since the human nature of Jesus Christ is forever united to the Divine Nature, the Nature of God is also present under the appearance of bread and wine. For this reason the Eucharist is an object of adoration and worship.

On the surface Jesus Christ appeared to be only man. On the surface a Christian appears to be no different from the pagan. On the surface the Eucharist appears no different from common bread and wine. One must have the eye of faith in order to behold, beneath the schematic appearance, the true

nature of Jesus Christ, of a Christian, of the Eucharist. It requires no greater faith to believe that Jesus Christ, who appeared to be mere man, is God than it does to believe that the Eucharist, which appears to be bread and wine, is this same Jesus Christ. Once the divinity of Jesus has been accepted, belief in the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist easily follows. Jesus Christ declared it so. *“I believe in order that I may know!”*

**In the next article we will present some of the theological errors concerning the Eucharist and the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation.**

**ROCK FOUNDATION REVISITED**  
**LESSON SEVENTEEN**  
**HOLY EUCHARIST AND THEOLOGY – PART I**

1. What does the expression, “I believe that I may know” mean to you?
2. What is the work of Christian Theologians?
3. What does it mean to you when it is said that there is a distinction between revealed truth and a theological interpretation of the truth?
4. Would you give an example of this distinction?
5. With whom does the final judgment rest concerning the teachings of Christian Theologians?
6. What was the theological opinion of St. John Damascene concerning the Eucharist?
7. What does the word *schema* signify?
8. What does the word *morphe* signify?
9. Using these two words, could you briefly explain the theory of St. John Damascene?
10. Can you give any other example in which the *schema* remains the same but the *morphe* changes?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 18

### HOLY EUCHARIST AND THEOLOGY - PART II

The Catholic theological doctrine on the Holy Eucharist has been refined and defined, for the most part, against a background of theological controversy. In the very first century the Church confronted the Gnostic teachings of Marcion and Basileides who denied the humanity of Christ. The Gnostics held all material creation to be evil. In defense of the humanity of Jesus, the Church emphasized the Real Presence of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus in the Eucharist. It was of these Gnostics that St. Ignatius (110 A.D.) wrote: *“They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again.”*

Around 336 A.D. Arius, a Christian priest from Alexandria, denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. He taught that the Word came from God before time and was superior to all other creatures, but not co-equal or co-substantial with God. Reaction to Arianism expressed itself in the Eucharistic celebration. Instead of now praying in thanksgiving with Christ to the Father, the Christian Community began to pray to Christ in the Eucharist. The Eucharist became more and more an object of adoration and worship. Eucharistic devotion expressed the divinity of the Word. The concept of the Eucharist as the Lord’s Supper, in which Christians united in love with Christ and in which the Christian Community itself was created, began to recede to the background as the divinity of Jesus received the focus of devotional attention. At this time St. Augustine wrote: *“No one should eat this flesh if he has not first adored it”*(Pss.98,99).

In 831 Paschasius Radbertus, Abbot of the monastery of Corbie, taught an exaggerated realism in which he maintained a complete identity of the Eucharistic Body of Christ with the historical body of Christ. Radbertus believed that the words of consecration changed the bread and wine into the same flesh and blood that Christ assumed as man. Many theologians such as Rabonus Maurus reacted to what they considered an exaggerated realism. This reaction led Berengarius of Tours to deny that the bread and wine were changed into the body and blood of Christ. For Berengarius, the Eucharist



was a symbol of Christ transfigured in heaven. He denied the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, while admitting a spiritual presence. Christian theologians reacted immediately to this teaching. The Roman Synod under Pope Leo IX, in the year 1050, condemned it. Berengarius recanted and made a profession of faith in the Real Presence. In truth Berengarius had not denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but only a real *physical* presence.

This was the time of the rebirth of Aristotelian philosophy in the West. The philosophical thought system formulated by Aristotle dominated the minds of Western men from the Middle Ages until recent times. This would have a profound and lasting effect upon the doctrine of the Eucharist. Our present theological interpretation of the Eucharist finds its roots there, within the rise of Scholasticism and the influence of Aristotelian thought upon the Western mind. Thomas of Aquinas (1225 A.D.) undertook the heroic task of expressing the Christian Faith within the Aristotelian thought system. It has been said that Thomas of Aquinas “baptized” the philosophy of Aristotle, and at the same time “aristotelized” the Christian Faith. Future controversies over the Eucharist would be expressed within the framework of this philosophical system. This would be true on both sides of the Eucharistic controversies.

Aristotle made a distinction between the inner reality of a being, and the external extension of a being, in other words, in the external manifestations of a being. The inner reality of every being he called “substance.”\_Substance implied reality and the deepest level of reality. Substance is the very nature and essence of a being. Substance is that which “underlies” (*sub strat*) all else in the being. It is the very foundation of a being. In order to be a substance, a thing must possess self-existence. In other words, it needs nothing else in which to exist. All other properties of being, Aristotle called “accidents”-- those things that “lie next to” the substance (*ad-cidit*) but are not of the substance. Such things as color, size, shape, physical extension would all be accidents. These things always exist in some other thing. For instance, the color blue never exists merely as pure blueness; it exists only in an object such as a cup or book. However, a cup is a cup and a book is a book, whether blue or not, for they are substances. The color blue is an accident. Substance explains *what* exists. Accidents describe *how* a thing exists.

Through Aristotelian philosophy, Christian theologians arrived at a wider concept of reality. A thing could be real but still not be physical or material. It could have a metaphysical existence. The Real Presence of Jesus came to be

viewed as a metaphysical reality rather than a physical reality. Medieval theologians held Jesus Christ really existed in the Eucharist in a non-physical manner. They applied the concepts of substance and accidents to the Holy Eucharist. They maintained the substance of the body and blood of Christ could be present in the Eucharist without having the physical qualities of Christ's body and blood present in the Eucharist. They taught that Jesus Christ was substantially present in the Eucharist. Christ is substantially present without actual extension. Christ's body is present in its external extension in one place only, namely, in Heaven. The Body of Christ, in addition to its natural mode of existence in Heaven, receives a new sacramental mode of being in the Eucharist.

In the thirteenth century, theologians proposed three theories to explain the Real Presence. One theory was called "consubstantiation." This theory held both the substances of bread and wine and the substances of the body and blood equally co-existed in the Eucharist. In this theory you had real bread and wine co-existing with the real body and blood of Christ. Communion consisted of receiving bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ. Many theologians found difficulty with this theory as it violated the natural principle that two bodies could not occupy the same space at the same time. The theory appeared to demand an unnecessary suspension of a natural law. A second theory maintained that at the consecration of the bread and wine, the reality of bread and wine became the reality of the body and blood of Christ. This theory left unexplained why "the reality" still appeared to be bread and wine.

Hildegard of Bingen introduced the term "transubstantiation." This theory taught that the substance of bread and wine was changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, while the accidents of bread and wine remained. The Doctrine of Transubstantiation ultimately would become the "sanctified" theological interpretation of the Real Presence in the Catholic Church. The theologians of the University of Paris subsequently adopted and defended this Eucharistic theory. When such religious sects as the Cathari and Albigenses, influenced by the ancient Gnostic-manichien heresies, denied the Real Presence, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) responded by officially proposing the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. St. Thomas of Aquinas accepted this teaching, and so finely developed the Doctrine of Transubstantiation that, in its light, all other theories appeared erroneous.

In the fourteenth century John Wycliffe denied the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. Wycliffe taught that only the substance of bread and wine remained after the words of consecration, and adoration of the Eucharist was idolatry. He held that the faithful only spiritually communicated with Jesus through the Eucharist. Wycliffe's teachings were condemned by the Synod of London (1382) and the Council of Constance (1418). The Synod and the Council supported the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

The Protestant Reformers, as a whole, rejected the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. Martin Luther maintained a belief in the Real Presence, teaching the doctrine of co-existence: the real body and blood of Jesus simultaneously co-existed with the real bread and wine at the time of Holy Communion. John Calvin rejected a substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ, but accepted a presence of power: in the Eucharistic celebration a power proceeded from the glorified Christ in Heaven into the bread and wine nourishing the souls of the predestined. Ulrich Zwingli denied the Real Presence. He held that bread and wine were but symbols of the body and blood of Christ and, as such, Holy Communion became a profession of faith by the Christian Community in the Redemption through the death of Christ. The Anglican Community originally held to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation but later permitted diversified beliefs in the Holy Eucharist.

The Protestant Reformers so widely differed in their understanding and teaching of the Eucharist that presently there exists no unified Protestant belief concerning the Holy Eucharist. John Calvin did urge Protestants to place the emphasis of their faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, without seeking to explain the manner in which such a presence takes place. After all, he confirmed, this is "a great mystery." Such a silence may be prudent behavior in the face of such a great mystery.

In 1545, the Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent to respond to the teachings of the Protestant Reformers. The Catholic bishops confirmed the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. It now became a matter of Faith to believe that the substances of bread and wine were changed by the words of consecration into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, while the accidents of bread and wine remained. The Council declared that ". . . *our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really and substantially contained under the appearances of bread and wine . . . . By the consecration of the bread and wine, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of*

*Christ our Lord, and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the substance of his blood” (Eucharist 1,4). The Council also forbade Catholics “henceforth to believe, teach, or preach anything about the most holy Eucharist which differs from what is explained and defined in this present decree.” This was the Catholic Church’s effort to preserve the faith of the Christian Community in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.*

Theologians have been quick to point out that the official teaching of the Church does not necessarily proclaim that Jesus is physically present in the Holy Eucharist, but there is a real presence of Jesus Christ localized in the Eucharist, not merely a spiritual reality present only in the mind of the believer. It is the Risen, Immortal, Incorruptible Jesus Christ who is present in the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist is a unique Sacrament, as it contains not only the power to make people holy, but it contains the very source of all holiness, God Himself. Because of the Real Presence of the divine, the Eucharist must be adored and treated with the greatest respect and appreciation.

Clearly, the Doctrine of Transubstantiation expresses the Catholic Faith in terms of scholastic theology and Aristotelian philosophy. It has served the Church well for four hundred years. However, is this the final theological explanation of the Eucharist within the Catholic Church? Many modern theologians feel it is not. In our day new theories have been proposed, such as “transfinalization” and “transignification”--neither of which, presently, has gained wide acceptance within the Church. However, when we consider the work of present day theologians, we do well to bear in mind the words of two recent popes. Pope Pius XII told Catholic theologians that our formulas of faith in which Christian dogma are expressed “*are not tied to a certain form of human culture or to a specific phase of scientific progress or to one or the other theological school*” (*Human generis --N. 24*). In his opening address to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII urgently proclaimed: “*A step forward must be taken in establishing the truth and forming the conscience. This step will hold faithfully to the doctrine handed down but will also study and expound it in accordance with the modes of expression of modern thought.*”

## LESSON EIGHTEEN

### HOLY EUCHARIST AND THEOLOGY – PART II

1. What within Church history aided the development of Christian Dogma?
2. How did the heretical teachings of Arius affect the Church's attitude toward the Eucharist?
3. What did Paschasius Radbertus teach?
4. What did Berengarius teach about the Holy Eucharist?
5. What philosophical system greatly affected the present day teaching of the Catholic Church on the Eucharist?
6. What is meant by “substance”?
7. What is meant by “accidents”?
8. How did the medieval theologians explain the “non-physical” presence of Christ in the Eucharist?
9. Is denying the “non-physical” presence of Christ the same as denying the Real Presence of Jesus' Body in the Eucharist?
10. What is meant by “consubstantiation”?
11. What is meant by “Transubstantiation”?
12. Can you explain the difference between the two?
13. According to the Council of Trent, what must Catholics believe about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 19

### CALVARY IN LIVING MEMORY

Having been born and reared in Mississippi when the population was less than one percent Catholic, it is my conviction that what distinguishes Catholics most from all other Christian Communities is our belief and devotion to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Once a Catholic understands and believes in the Mass, it makes all other forms of Christian worship inadequate.

A few years ago I arrived about sundown in the city of Jerusalem. It was my first visit to the Holy City. The day was Good Friday, and I was most anxious to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Around eleven in the evening our guide led us through the dark and empty streets to the Church. The gates were locked and we could only stand before them. Unknown to us at that moment, we stood at the foot of Calvary. As if by a magnetic force, the earth beneath me drew me to my knees. Time ceased and the spirit entered into a timeless peace and security--a feeling of being home at last. The body felt an attachment to the very stones supporting it. Only by sheer force of will could I rise and return to the hotel. It was but the prelude. Early Monday morning I had the indescribable experience of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Mt. Calvary. The joy of this experience is understood when you know that a Catholic believes the Sacrifice of the Mass is a re-enactment of the Sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. St. Augustine defines the very purpose of sacrifice as, *"everything that is done in order that we may, by a holy fellowship, inhere in God."* The Mass is the living memory of Calvary!

To understand the mystery of the Mass, one must turn back the pages of religious history almost to its beginning--to a man called Melchizedek. He suddenly appears as the priest of Salem who meets Abraham returning from victory over his enemies. Melchizedek offers bread and wine in thanksgiving for the victory. Abraham offers tithes to Melchizedek, demonstrating the priest's superiority over him and his descendants. Melchizedek enters without a beginning and departs without an ending. He creates an aura of infinity. He reappears in the Psalms as a symbol of the Messiah. The psalmist proclaims of

the Messiah: *“Thou are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps.110:4).*

Priests within the Jewish religion were of the order of Aaron, and only his descendants could offer sacrifice in the temple. The psalmist prophesied a new priesthood, implying a new sacrifice--presumably in which bread and wine would be offered. Isaiah proclaimed an unthinkable thing in the mind of the Jews: *“Some of these (Gentiles) I will take as priests and Levites, says the Lord” (Is.66:21).* The prophet Malachi told of God’s displeasure with the Jerusalem sacrifice and foretold a new sacrifice: *“For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name is great among the nations; and everywhere they bring sacrifices to My name and a pure offering; for great is My name among the nations, says the Lord of hosts”(Mal.1:11).* “A pure offering” would rule out the sacrifices of mere men.

Jesus the Messiah identifies Himself with the role of Melchizedek at the Last Supper:

*During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. “Take this and eat it,” He said, “this is My body.” Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. “All of you must drink from it,” he said, “for this is My blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins”(Mt.26:26-28).*

The *“blood of the covenant”* is sacrificial blood. Jesus speaks of His blood being *“poured out . . . for the forgiveness of sins.”* The Last Supper is a sacrifice. The separation of His body and blood are mystically represented in the separation of the bread and wine, and the death to occur on Calvary is mystically represented at the Last Supper.

Jesus commands the Apostles at the Last Supper: *“Do this as a remembrance of Me.”* Jesus commands them to reenact what had been done as a remembrance of Him. He calls the Apostles into His priesthood to offer His body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine. St. Paul later wrote of this sacrifice: *“Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes!”(1Cor.11:26).* Therefore, the reenactment of the Last Supper proclaims the death of the Lord--it proclaims the forgiveness of sins. What the Lord’s Supper presented the night before

Calvary, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass presents in the years following Calvary.

The early Church put a protective veil of secrecy around this holy mystery. It referred to it only as “the breaking of bread.” All Christians would know this referred to the Lord’s Supper from the words of the Gospel, “*Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it.*”

When the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, Jewish sacrifice came to an end. This left a deep void in the lives of Jews; but long before that, in the hearts of many Jewish Christians they found themselves excluded from temple sacrifice because of their faith in Jesus. The author of the book to the Hebrews wrote to demonstrate that the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary fulfilled and brought to perfection religious sacrifice. The sacrifices of the Old Covenant were no longer needed. Jesus had been “*designated by God as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek*”(Heb.5:10). Hebrews presents Jesus as entering into His priestly role when He offered Himself on the Cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. At His death He enters into eternity as high priest of the New Covenant. The author leads the Christian believer beyond life on earth--beyond the veil of time into eternity. Here he presents to us the changeless, timeless portrait of the eternal high priest and the eternal effects of His unique and unrepeatable sacrifice. Our faith and hope are surely and firmly anchored “*beyond the veil through which Jesus, our forerunner, has entered on our behalf*” as high priest (Heb.6:19);

*“. . . he entered heaven itself that he might appear before God now on our behalf” (Heb.9:24).*

*“He entered . . . with his own blood, and achieved eternal redemption” (Heb.9:12).*

*“Not that he might offer himself there again and again . . . ; if that were so, he would have had to suffer death over and over from the creation of the world” (Heb. 9:25-26).*

He has no need to offer sacrifice day after day; he did that once for all when he offered himself. Our author teaches us that the bloody sacrifice of Christ on the Cross cannot be repeated. There is no need, in the New Covenant, to offer up a new and different sacrifice. No other sacrifice could avail anything—“*There remains for us no further sacrifice for sin*”(Heb.10:26). Once



for all *“Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins and took his seat forever at the right hand of God” (Heb.10:12); “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb.10:10); “Christ was offered up once to take away the sins of many” (Heb.9:24-28).*

In time, one thing follows another. In eternity all things are. The author of Hebrews presents to us an eternal reality. He compares it to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. The author does not deal with how this eternal reality of the New Covenant is expressed in time, and applied to individual people being saved on earth. Hebrews does confirm that *“Jesus, because He remains forever, has a priesthood which does not pass away. Therefore He is always able to save those who approach God through Him, since He forever lives to make intercession for them”(Heb.7:24,25).* It is the Church that teaches us how we, in our earthly existence, are able to approach God through the Lamb of God, and by the blood of Jesus *“cleanse our conscience from dead works to worship the living God”(Heb.9:14).* We are able to do this through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The teaching of the Church in no way contradicts Hebrews. It is indeed one of the more difficult Scriptural doctrines. Here it is well to recall the words of St. Peter: *“There are certain passages in them hard to understand. The ignorant and unstable distort them--just as they do the rest of Scripture--to their own ruin”(2Pet.3:16).*

The Sacrifice of the Mass is not a different sacrifice from that of Calvary. It is not a daily repeat of the bloody sacrifice of the Cross. It is a representation of the one eternal sacrifice in time, in order that men living today may have operative in their lives the power of the Blood of Jesus. The Council of Trent defines as a matter of Catholic Faith: *“In the Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ’s Sacrifice on the Cross is made present, its memory is celebrated, and its saving power is applied.”* The Council teaches that Christ left a visible Sacrifice to His Church *“in which that bloody sacrifice which was once offered on the Cross should be made present, its memory preserved to the end of the world, and its salvation bringing power applied to the forgiveness of sins which are daily committed by us.”*

The Sacrifice of the Mass represents the Sacrifice on the Cross insofar as the sacrificial Body and sacrificial Blood of Christ are made present under the separate species of bread and wine--symbolically representing the real separation of the Body and Blood of Christ on the Cross. The Mass in no way

detracts from the Sacrifice of the Cross. It draws its whole power from the Sacrifice of the Cross whose fruits it applies to individual persons.

Our present belief is consistent with the teaching of the early Church. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells Christians that to eat food sacrificed to idols is to take communion with devils. He argues that you cannot participate in *“the table of the Lord”* and also in *“the table of the demons.”* Paul’s words imply that both are sacrificial foods. It was a belief among ancient people that to partake of food sacrificed to God was to commune with God, the Source of life. The author of Hebrews writes: *“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat”*(Heb.13:10). If Paul confirms that the Lord’s Supper *“proclaims the death of the Lord until He comes again,”* it must represent, in some realistic fashion, the death of Jesus on the Cross.

The Didache, one of our earliest Christian sources (c.100 A.D.), speaks of Christian sacrifice: *“On the day of the Lord collect together, break bread and give thanks, after having first confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be a clean one. For this is that of which the Lord says: ‘In this place and at that time a clean sacrifice shall be brought to me.’”* St. Irenaeus of Lyons who died in 202 A.D., teaches that the flesh and blood of Christ *“are the new sacrifice and the New Covenant which has been handed down to the Church by the Apostles, and which she, throughout the whole world, offers to God in fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi.”* To the Ephesians St. Cyprian wrote around 253 A.D.: *“The priest who imitates that which Christ did, truly takes the place of Christ, and offers there in the Church a true and perfect sacrifice to God the Father.”* St. Augustine (430 A.D.) tells us that *“the daily sacrifice in the Church”* is the mysterious replica of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which was made once and for all time.

If the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass proclaims the death of the Lord, then it likewise proclaims the forgiveness of sins. The Mass is, as the Church teaches, the greatest sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we can offer to God, but the Mass also causes the forgiveness of sins. The Council of Trent teaches: *“Propitiated by the offering of this sacrifice, God, by granting the grace and the gift of penance, remits trespasses and sins, however grievous they may be.”*

Yes, this is the belief that makes many Christians Catholic and keeps them so. If this be our belief, then we should take to heart the words of Hebrews: *“We should not absent ourselves from the assembly as some do”*(Heb.10:25).

## LESSON NINETEEN

### CALVARY IN LIVING MEMORY

1. According to the Catholic Church, what is the Mass?
2. What does Psalm 110:4 teach about the Messiah (Christ)?
3. What do the Prophets Isaiah (66:21) and Malachi (1:11) foretell about future ritual worship?
4. What does the Church see the Last Supper to be?
5. What are the words of Jesus that call His apostles into His priesthood?
6. Why were the sacrifices of the Old Covenant no longer needed?
7. What is the essential point made by the author of Hebrews about the sacrifice of Christ?
8. To what does the author of Hebrews compare the sacrifice of Jesus?
9. What does the Council of Trent teach about the Sacrifice of the Mass?
10. Can you explain why this teaching does not contradict the teaching of Hebrews?
11. What words of Paul strongly suggest the Lord's Supper to be a sacrifice?
12. What is one of the great affects of the Mass?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 20

### EUCCHARIST AS SACRIFICE - PART I

The Second Vatican Council teaches that *“God, the inspirer and author of both testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New” (Rev.IV-16)*. The Christian Church is “a new creation” upon an old foundation. It did not just “happen” but developed as part of the continuing divine plan of salvation in the world. In the Old Testament the Christian Religion finds its roots, and in the Christian Religion the Old Testament finds its fulfillment. To understand the full flowering of revelation in our religion today, we wisely ought to study the roots of that revelation as existing in the Old Testament.

The Catholic Church has constantly maintained that the Lord’s Supper is not only the sacrament of the Real Presence but also the re-enactment of the Christian sacrifice. In order to better understand this teaching, let us review the concepts of sacrifice in the Old Testament.

To offer sacrifice to God is a universal religious phenomenon scarcely absent from any religion. As with most ancient religions, sacrifice, as sanctioned by the Mosaic Law, existed in the Jewish Religion. The oldest Hebrew term for sacrifice was *minhah*, signifying any “gift” offered to God or man. Later the word *corbon* came into common usage, signifying any valuable gift offered to God, such as frankincense or wine; however, the primary gift came to be the life of an animal which later would be eaten. From the practice of offering the lives of animals, the word *zebah* came to indicate “sacrifice.” Literally it meant “to slaughter.” The word “altar” comes from *mizbeah* meaning “the place of slaughter.”

The *giving of a gift* to God essentially expressed the concept of sacrifice in the Old Testament. In the Near East the offering of a gift to a superior by a subject implied subjection and loyalty of the subject to his Lord. Yahweh told the Israelites: “. . . *No one shall appear before me empty-handed*”(Ex.23:15). Through offering sacrifice, people acknowledged the power of God over their lives and their dependence upon God. At times, sacrifice was offered in order to influence God--even to control his attitude and action towards people.

However, sacrifice generally acknowledged the proper order existing between creature and Creator, and it was offered in order to restore the proper order and to conform to the will of God. Most especially, sacrifice expressed the innate desire of people for communion and union with God.

The Mosaic Law prescribed three kinds of sacrifice: gift offerings, shared or peace offerings, and sin offerings. In the “gift offering” people acknowledged their dependence upon God for the gifts received and their gratitude to Him. Likewise they expressed their faith and confidence that God would continually supply these gifts to them. In such a sacrifice the gifts, such as cereal, wine or oil, were completely removed from the use of the offerers. We find the sacrifice of “gift offerings” prescribed in Chapter Twenty-six of Deuteronomy. Through “shared or peace offerings” the Jews expressed their need for union with Yahweh in order to live rightly. In such offerings, part of the food was burnt as a “pleasing fragrance” to Yahweh and the remainder was eaten by those participating in the sacrifice. This was considered a sacred meal that cemented the bond of friendship between God and His people. The eating of the sacrificial food effected real union between the divine and human. These offerings are described in Chapter Three of Leviticus. In their “sin offerings,” the Israelites acknowledged their past disregard of Yahweh and their disobedience to His commands. The sins of the people were symbolically transferred to the sacrificial victim by laying hands on the head of the victim. The blood of the victim was later sprinkled upon the altar or poured out at the foot of the altar. This sprinkling and pouring out of this “living” blood purified the offerers of their sins.

The Jews were forbidden to drink blood: *“Wherever you dwell, you shall not partake of any blood, be it of bird or of animal. Every person who partakes of any blood shall be cut off from his people (Lv.7:26-27).* The Scriptures confirm blood to be sacred. Yahweh gives this instruction to the Israelites: *“Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may thereby be made for your own lives, because it is the blood, as the seat of life, that makes atonement. That is why I have told the Israelites: No one among you, not even a resident alien, may partake of blood”(Lv.17:11-12).*

The Jews believed all life pertained to God. God possessed life, and all living creatures participated in that life, which returned to God at the death of any being. The Scriptures imply the “living” blood of the sacrificial victim carried the divine power to purify whatever it touched of sin and contamination.

One of the most important moments in the history of Israel occurred at Mount Sinai when Israel entered into the covenant with Yahweh. We are told in Chapter Twenty-four of Exodus that Moses *“erected at the foot of the mountain an altar and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.”* There they offered holocausts and sacrifice *“as peace offerings to the Lord.”* We are told Moses *“took the blood and sprinkled it on the people saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you . . . .’”* The Scriptures then indicate that the seventy elders of Israel, representatives of the people, participated in a sacrificial meal (Ex.24:4-11). We will later see that both Matthew and Mark implied that the Last Supper re-enacted the incident of Mount Sinai, and inaugurated the New Covenant. In both accounts we read that Jesus said: *“For this is My blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins”(Mt.26:28).*

Both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments imply the necessity of blood for the purification from sin. When one looks beneath this teaching, one begins to realize that the purification of man, not the appeasement of God, lies at the root of sacrifice.

Once a year on the feast of Yom Kippur, the Jewish high priest entered the Holy of Holies within the temple, and there sprinkled sacrificial blood upon the pure gold lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark symbolically represented Israel’s covenant with Yahweh. The gold lid was called the *kaporet* or the “propitiatory,” and became known as the “Mercy Seat” of Yahweh, because the sprinkling of blood upon the propitiatory purified and re-consecrated the people, the temple, and the land to God. For this reason it was called the Day of Atonement.

Through the sprinkling of blood, purification from sin occurred. However, purification was a work of Yahweh who expiated the sins of His people and removed their guilt through the means of blood. The Psalmist sang: *“We are overcome by our sins; it is You who expiate (pardon) them.”* Yahweh said through Isaiah: *“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated . . . .” (Is.40:2).* Daniel foretold: *“Then transgression will stop and sin will end, guilt will be expiated”(Dn.9:24).*

Apparently Paul saw the death of Jesus on the Cross as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Paul says of Jesus Christ: *“Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe . . . .”(Rom.3:25).* The shedding of Jesus’ blood was seen, not as the means to satisfy the anger of God against sinners,

but as the divine means to remove the sins of mankind. The death of Christ on the Cross perfectly revealed the Father's love for sinners:

*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, Son of Man be lifted up, that all who believe may have eternal life in Him. Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His only Son . . . God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (Jn.3:14-17).*

Jesus willingly accepted death on the Cross in order to become the divine means to purify mankind of sin. The author of Hebrews would later reflect:

*For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself up unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God (Heb.9:13-14).*

In the Christian Church, the Cross of Christ became the "propitiatory" and the "mercy seat" of the New Covenant--one covered with an element far more precious than gold--one adorned and sparkling with the red jewels of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. We read in First Peter:

*Realize that you were delivered from the futile way of life your fathers handed on to you, not by any diminishable sum of silver or gold, but by Christ's blood beyond all price: the blood of a spotless, unblemished lamb chosen before the world's foundation and revealed for your sake in these last days" (1Pet.1:18-20).*

The ritual sacrifices of the Old Covenant endeavored to bring the people into a personal communion and union with Yahweh. This would be its true end and goal. However ritual sacrifices, as other religious rituals, can degenerate into mere formal and mechanical acts that convey the religious beliefs held by a religious society while failing to touch, spiritually, the lives of the worshipers. The true end of ritual worship becomes frustrated. This came to be in Israel, and the Jewish prophets and psalmists sought to correct these abuses by re-emphasizing the essential ends of religious worship now lost in the formal temple worship. We read in Hosea: "For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts"(Hos.6:6). Isaiah writes: "What care I for the number of your sacrifices? . . . In the blood of

*calves, lambs, and goats I find no pleasure . . . Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before My eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good”(Is.1:11,16-17a). The Psalmist sings: “Sacrifice or oblation You wished not, but ears open to obedience You gave me. Holocausts or sin-offerings You sought not; then said I, ‘Behold I come: in the written scroll it is prescribed for me. To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and Your law is within My heart!’” (Ps.40:7-9).*

The attitude of the prophets and psalmists led certain Christians to erroneously maintain that such ritual forms of worship were unworthy of God and useless to believers. They maintained the prophets foretold the end of ritual worship and of a religion in which God would be worshiped *“in spirit and truth”(Jn.4:24)*, through submission to His will and the perfect observance of His moral law. However this implies much more than the prophets and psalmist intended, who sought not the end of ritual worship, but an end of the perversion of it. These same prophets foretold a new covenant of the spirit, but likewise, a new ritual worship that would bring religious worship to perfection. The prophet Malachi writes: *“For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; and everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering; for great is my name among the nations, says the Lord of hosts”(Mal.1:11)*. Malachi foretold the coming of One who would purify His people and His worship: *“Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord, as in the days of old, as in years gone by”(Mal.3:4)*.

Perhaps in the days of Israel’s exile, when temple worship and sacrifice ceased with the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians, Israel came to understand the sacrifice truly desired by God. Israel came to the new concept of sacrifice as personal martyrdom, in which a total offering of one’s person occurred. This concept found expression in Deutero-Isaiah in which Israel is described as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh:

*If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him. Through his sufferings, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. . . because he surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked; and he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses (Is.53:10,11b,12b).*



**It is not accidental that Matthew and Mark recorded in the Last Supper narrative that the blood of Jesus was poured out “for many.” Jesus and His passion are deliberately identified with the Suffering Servant account of Isaiah.**

**In our next article we will see how the Christian Church came to see, in the martyrdom of Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrifice that fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets, and how the re-enactment of the Last Supper ritual became the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi:**

*For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name is great among the nations; and everywhere they bring sacrifice to My name, and a pure offering . . .*

## LESSON TWENTY

### EUCCHARIST AS SACRIFICE – PART I

1. What did “sacrifice” mean in the Old Testament?
2. What did the offering of sacrifice signify?
3. What did the “gift offering” express?
4. What was the significance of the sacrificial banquet?
5. What did the “sin offerings” express?
6. Why were the Jews forbidden to partake of blood?
7. According to the Old Testament, what power did sacrificial blood possess?
8. How was the Old Testament sealed?
9. What do we learn from Romans 3:25?
10. What do we learn from Hebrews 9:13,14?
11. What, in the Christian Church, is the “mercy seat”?
12. What was the purpose of ritual sacrifice in the Old Testament?
13. What does Isaiah 53:10 teach about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 21

### EUCCHARIST AS SACRIFICE - PART II

The earthly life of Jesus Christ, Son of God, was a great mystery. This mystery, the Christian Church experienced. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church grew in understanding of the mystery of Christ. The teachings of the Church reflect its continual growth and development in understanding divine revelation. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote:

*For there is growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers who treasure these things in their hearts . . . . For, as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her . . . The Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them (Rev. Ch. II, art. 8).*

Nothing in the life of the Church challenged the faith of the early Church more than the death of Jesus on the Cross: “*We were hoping that He was the one who would set Israel free*”(Lk.24:21). Only when the relationship between the death of Christ and redemption became clearer did the early Church arrive at an understanding of the mystery of Jesus’ death. Like the rising sun dispelling the darkness of night, the Church saw the death of Jesus on the Cross as the fountain from which flowed expiation of sin and redemption of mankind. It beheld the Cross as the fountain of living water from which flowed divine life to all believers. Early in its history, the Church identified the sacrificial aspects of Christ’s death on the Cross. It recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God sacrificed “*to take away the sins of the world.*” It realized that the death of Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant promised by the prophets. The blood shed by Jesus on the Cross became a central point in the proclamation of the Gospel. Later Paul would say that he preached “*nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified*”(1Cor.2:2).

As seen from Acts, the early Jewish Christians continued to pray and worship in the temple: *“They went to the temple area together every day, while in their homes they broke bread . . . They devoted themselves to the apostles’ instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”*(Acts 2:46,42). The Church recognized quite early that the re-enactment of the Lord’s Supper (*“the breaking of bread”*) celebrated and renewed the New Covenant. Apparently the Lord’s Supper was seen as a sacred banquet in which the Christian Community entered into fellowship (*koinonia*) with the Risen Savior, through which the unity of the Community was cemented. However, in Jerusalem, temple worship persisted in the early Church, as can be seen by James’ words to Paul only a few years before the death of Paul: *“You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have come to believe, all of them staunch defenders of the law”*(Acts 21:20). James even urged Paul to offer sacrifice in the temple. Evidently this practice ended with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of temple worship in 70 A.D.

Long before this occurred, the Christian Community recognized the sacrificial aspects of Christ’s death on the Cross. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *“Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”*(1Cor. 5:7c-8).

The author of the Book of Hebrews wrote to demonstrate the fact that the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary fulfilled and brought to *perfection* religious sacrifice. It was the intention of the author to show that Christianity was the perfect, the universal, and eternal religion. It alone possessed the one perfect high priest and the one perfect sacrifice for the remission of sins. To the mind of the author, priesthood and sacrifice were essentials of a true religion. What was perfect and eternal in the mind of the author of Hebrews must exist in the eternal order, and not here in time. He demonstrates how the historical death of Christ on Calvary becomes an eternal sacrifice--ever present in eternity in order to effect the salvation of mankind here in time. (When people use this work to attack the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, they completely misinterpret the intentions of the sacred writer. Whether this eternal sacrifice would find some concrete reflection in the liturgy of the Christian Community was not the subject dealt with in Hebrews.)

In time, one thing follows the other. In eternity all things are; there is no succession of moments. The author of Hebrews presents to us an eternal reality. He compares it to the sacrifices of the Old Covenant that find their

completion and perfection in the sacrifice of the New Covenant. The author does not tell us how this eternal reality of the New Covenant is expressed here and now in the lives of people. Hebrews does confirm that *“Jesus, because He remains forever, has a priesthood which does not pass away. Therefore, He is always able to save those who approach God through him, since He forever lives to make intercession for them”*(Heb.7:24-25).

It is the Church that teaches us how we, in our earthly existence, are able to approach God through the Lamb of God, and by the blood of Jesus *“cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God!”*(Heb.9:14). We are able to do this through the Lord’s Supper, which the Church came to recognize, not only as a sacrament, but also as a sacrifice.

By the time of the writing of the New Testament, the sacrificial aspects of the Lord’s Supper were recognized within the Church. The Last Supper was seen to have pre-figured and anticipated Calvary, and actually celebrated and experienced the graces of Christ’s death on Calvary. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells Christians that to eat food sacrificed to idols is to take communion with devils. He argues that you cannot participate in *“the table of the Lord”* and also in *“the table of the demons.”* Paul’s words imply that both are sacrificial foods. The author of Hebrews writes: *“We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat”*(Heb.13:10). If Paul confirms that the Lord’s Supper *“proclaims the death of the Lord until He comes again,”* then it must represent, in some realistic fashion, the death of Jesus on the Cross.

The formula *“blood of the covenant”* used by Matthew and Mark is taken from Exodus 24:8. It calls to mind the whole covenant theology of Exodus. In these texts the Last Supper parallels the covenant events of Mount Sinai. The notion of *“covenant blood”* definitely introduces sacrificial overtones into the Last Supper event. Christ’s life and death is presented as a covenant sacrifice. Both Matthew and Mark say that the blood of Jesus was poured out *“for many.”* The expression *“for many”* calls to mind the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, and it introduces that theology into the Last Supper. The Suffering Servant is said to have borne the sins of many (53:12), and thus to have made them righteous (53:11). *“Giving up his body”* and *“giving up his soul”* are commonly used in reference to the death of martyrs. Jesus characterized his coming death to be martyrdom. He interprets his own life and death in the terms of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh.

The Catholic Church teaches that in the Eucharistic celebration, the saving act of Christ on Calvary becomes a present reality. It is the acceptance of God's gift that occurred not only in the distant past, but also occurs here and now in the Eucharistic celebration. This celebration permits a Christian to personally enter into the most perfect act of love and adoration of God, and to become one with Christ and His sacrifice.

The Protestant Reformers primarily rejected the sacrificial dimensions of the Eucharist as taught by the Catholic Church because they erroneously believed that the Church taught the Eucharist to be a separate and independent sacrifice from the sacrifice of Calvary, and that through the sacrificial activity of the priest at Mass the sins and punishment due to them were remitted. Both Luther and Calvin attacked this false concept. However, all this was a misunderstanding of the Catholic doctrine. Even Luther realized that the historical act of Christ's death must be applied in time: *"The blood-shedding is real only when it is poured out for me."*

It is one thing to hear and read the Church's explanation of this doctrine, and quite another to understand what one hears and reads. The teachings of the Catholic Church, defined at the Council of Trent, are expounded in vocabulary and terms often lost upon people today who are trained neither in the logic nor the philosophical terms of the period. As clearly as possible, let us re-state the Catholic position on the Eucharist as a sacrifice. First of all, the Eucharist is *"a true and perfect sacrifice."* In a religious sacrifice a victim is offered for the expiation of sins. At the Last Supper Jesus' death is symbolized by the separation of his body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine. He speaks of His blood as being shed for the forgiveness of sins. *"Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. 'All of you must drink from it,' He said, 'for this is My blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'"* (Mt.26:27-28). There is no doubt that these words seek to recall the sacrifice at Mount Sinai, when Israel entered into the covenant with Yahweh. There Israel was sprinkled with the blood of the victim, and the elders partook of a sacrificial banquet. The very tense used in these scriptures implies an ongoing action through which sins will be forgiven. A command was given to the Church: *"Do this as a remembrance of me"*(Lk.22:19; 1Cor.11:24-26). The Last Supper was to be a liturgical memorial service. A "memorial" calls something to mind and makes it actually present. When Israel celebrated the Passover--a remembrance of her salvation--she embraced it as a present reality. She stepped into this historical moment and made it a present concrete reality. A religious

memorial recalled deeds of God to mind, and summoned the spirit to place hope and trust in God's saving deed. And so Paul writes: "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes!*" (1Cor.11:26). To "proclaim" is more than making a verbal announcement. It implies making a thing real and present. Paul implies that the Eucharistic celebration proclaims the remission of sins. Through this Eucharistic celebration, the effects of Christ's passion and death are being applied to the souls of present day men and women. The Council of Trent therefore affirms: "*In the sacrifice of the mass, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made present, its memory is celebrated, and its saving power is applied.*"

The Church firmly maintains that the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Sacrifice on the Cross are one and the same sacrifice. The Church does not teach that Jesus dies again over and over in the Mass. There was one sacrificial death of Jesus on Calvary, and Christ dies no more. In the Eucharist, the sacrificial gift and the primary sacrificing priest are identical to that on Calvary. Therefore it is the one and same sacrifice. What makes the Eucharist different from Calvary is, as the Church teaches, "*the nature and mode of the offering only are different.*"

If individuals cannot understand what is meant by the words "*the nature and mode of the offering only are different,*" they certainly do not understand the teachings of the Catholic Church on the Doctrine, and what is being implied.

On Calvary Jesus was offered in a *bloody* manner; that was the nature of that sacrifice. It was a bloody sacrifice in which His blood actually poured out of His physical body and death resulted. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, Jesus is offered in an *unbloody* manner. No physical death of Jesus occurs. The death of Jesus is mystically represented by the separate consecration of the body and blood of Jesus. The separation of the body and blood of Jesus mystically symbolizes Jesus' death on the Cross. The Mass is a mystical representation in an *unbloody* manner of Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross. What historically occurred at Calvary and was eternalized by Christ's entrance with His precious blood into the heavenly sanctuary, has been made present in time through the Eucharistic celebration, in order "*to proclaim the forgiveness of sins until the Lord returns.*"

If the Eucharist proclaims the death of the Lord, then it likewise proclaims the forgiveness of sins. The Mass, as the Church teaches, is the greatest sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we can offer to God, but the Mass also causes the forgiveness of sins. The Council of Trent teaches: "*Propitiated by*

*the offering of this sacrifice, God, by granting the grace and the gift of penance, remits trespasses and sins, however grievous they may be.”* The Mass in no way detracts from the sacrifice of the Cross. It draws its whole power from the sacrifice of the Cross whose fruits it applies to each individual.

Our present belief is consistent with the teachings of the early Church. The Didache, one of our earliest Christian sources, speaks of Christian sacrifice: *“On the day of the Lord collect together, break bread and give thanks, after having first confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be a clean one. For this is that of which the Lord says: ‘In this place and at that time a clean sacrifice shall be brought to me.’”*

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who died in 202 A.D., teaches that the flesh and blood of Christ *“are the new sacrifice of the New Covenant which have been handed down to the Church by the Apostles, and which throughout the whole world offers to God in fulfillment of the Prophecy of Malachi.”*

To the Ephesians St. Cyprian wrote around 258 A.D.: *“The priest who imitates that which Christ did truly takes the place of Christ, and offers there in the Church a true and perfect sacrifice to God the Father.”* St. Augustine (430 A.D.) tells us that the daily sacrifice of the Mass *“is the mysterious replica of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which was made once and for all time.”*

As history moved away from Mt. Calvary and Jesus’ historical death, the effects of that death would move along within history, enabling all succeeding men and women to share in a sacred meal of union with Jesus Christ. Through the Precious Blood of Jesus, they would once again be purified of sin and nourished by the Bread of Heaven in order to continue the desert journey to the Promised Land. The Eucharist, as sacrifice, places in the hands of the Church, here and now, the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross as a means of intercession with God for sinners. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote around 348 A.D.: *“Then, upon the completion of the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless worship, over the propitiatory victim, we call upon God for the common peace of the Church--we all pray and offer this Sacrifice for all who are in need”* (*Mystogogic* 5, 8).

This, essentially, is the Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist as sacrifice. It came to be called the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At one time, in the history of the Church, it was called the *missarum solemnia* –“the ceremony of dismissals”--referring primarily to the dismissal of the catechumens after



the sermon, and the dismissal of the rest of the congregation after communion. In time, this was shortened merely to *missa* or “mass.”

## LESSON TWENTY-ONE

### EUCCHARIST AS SACRIFICE – PART II

1. From the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, what do we learn about Christian Truth?
2. What caused a big problem to the faith of the early Christians?
3. What did the author of Hebrews seek to teach through his Epistle?
4. How are the effects of the Sacrifice of Christ made available to people today?
5. What do the Scriptures, concerning the Last Supper, reveal about the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross?
6. What does the Sacrifice of the Mass make possible for people today?
7. What is meant by the Last Supper being a liturgical memorial service?
8. Why is the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross the one and same sacrifice?
9. What is meant by only the “nature and mode of the offering are different”?
10. What does St. Irenaeus teach about the Lord’s Supper?
11. What does St. Cyprian teach about priests of the New Covenant?
12. What does the word “Mass” mean, and where did the word originate?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 22

### MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

For many non-Catholics, the most difficult thing about being a Catholic is having to confess one's sins to a priest. Many Catholics may agree with them. One of the most difficult things about being a Catholic priest is having to hear the confessions of sins. Yet, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the most beautiful expressions of God's mercy in the Christian Community.

*"Who but God can forgive sins?"* has echoed through the ages since the days of Jesus. When Jesus looked at the paralyzed man before him and said: *"Your sins are forgiven you,"* people had a profound reaction. *"Who but God can forgive sins? The man blasphemes."* The Jews believed all disease to be caused by sin. If a man would be cured of a disease, he must first be freed from his sins. When Jesus cured the afflicted man, He proved to the Jewish mind that the man's sins had been removed. Matthew tells us: *"At the sight, a feeling of awe came over the crowd and they praised God for giving such authority to men"* (Mt.9:1-8). It certainly is cause for awe if men have such power. It is interesting to note that Matthew does not say "to a man" but "to men."

It is true God forgives sins, but He gives this power to His Son Jesus. Paul taught that God is reconciling the world to Himself through Jesus Christ. By His death on the Cross, Jesus atoned for all the sins of mankind. For this, God granted Him the power to forgive the sins of all men who believed in Him and were baptized. To say that all sins have been atoned for does not imply all sins have been forgiven. The atonement of Jesus makes the forgiveness of sins possible. The Church can preach a *"baptism unto the remission of sins."* Paul said God *"has given us the ministry of reconciliation . . . He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors for Christ, God as it were appealing through us"*(2Cor.5:18-20).

No Christian will deny that Jesus possessed the power to forgive sins. Did he impart this power to the Church? Scripture teaches that the Church is the *"Body of Christ"*(1Cor.12:27). This implies that Jesus still lives and acts on earth through His body, the Church, as he did through His physical body

while on earth. What the Church does in the Name of Jesus, Jesus Himself accomplishes.

The twelve Apostles were the foundation members of the Church. Jesus said to them: *“I assure you, whatever you declare bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven”*(Mt.18:18). The Risen Jesus appeared to the Apostles on Easter Sunday. John tells us that Jesus *“breathed on them”*; this implies that He imparts to them His very own spirit. After this He said to them: *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound”*(Jn.20:23). Jesus clearly gives His Church the power to forgive sins, not merely to declare that sins are forgiven. He gives the Church a judicial power to bind and loose. The Church will grow in the understanding and use of this divine prerogative.

The Church first exercises the power to forgive sins through the Sacrament of Baptism. When a person comes to baptism with a spirit of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, all sins are remitted. The baptized person receives a new life of grace through the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The minister of baptism forgives the sins with these words: *“I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”* In other words, he says: *“through the power of the Triune God, I wash away your sins.”* The minister does not say “Jesus baptizes you” but “I baptize you.” This is the most commonly accepted way for men to forgive sins. Every man who baptizes forgives sins. When a Catholic goes to confession, the priest says: *“I absolve you of your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”* It is the same power, but this time the sins have been committed by a baptized person. The only means by which the Church can absolve the sins of a non-Catholic is through baptism. Many people are willing to accept forgiveness of their sins through a man in baptism, but not through the confessional, because in this Sacrament, one must not only repent, he must confess his or her sins and do penance.

The use of the power to forgive the sins of the baptized grew in the Church. It first came as a shock to the early Christians that members of the Church would sin after baptism. Sin seemed so incompatible with being a Christian. The Church was extremely reluctant to receive sinful members back into the Church. Sins such as murder, adultery, and apostasy were forgiven only at the time of death. Some ministers were even refusing absolution at death. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. condemned this rigorism among ministers.

Using its power to bind and loose, the Church tells us that if we repent of our sins and confess them, our sins will be remitted; if not, our sins remain. This does not mean that God cannot forgive sins, independent of the ministry of the Church. Jesus Himself declared a certain woman's sins had been forgiven because of her love. He does not say He forgave her sins.

Perhaps if we return to the New Testament, we may better understand why the Church exercises her power of reconciliation in this way. Remember, when the lepers came to Jesus and asked to be healed, He healed them, but in all such incidents He demanded they go show themselves to the priest. The Jews did not distinguish between disease of the body and sin of the soul--they were two sides of the same coin. A person who contracted leprosy was excommunicated from the Community of God--with both social and religious repercussions. In Jewish belief, since he could not participate in public worship he was cut off from God. The leprosy was but a sign of the sin. It is certainly true that sin alienates one from true self, neighbor, and God. The Jewish Law of excommunication symbolized this truth. Jesus cured the lepers, but the priest had to receive the healed men back into the Community. Only then would the men be restored to communion with God, since once again he shared in communal worship. We see that sin has its effect not only upon the soul of man and his relationship with God, but also on the community.

A baptized Christian is a member of the body of Christ. Every sin committed by a Christian harms the body of Christ--the Church. St. Paul writes: "*You then are the body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it*"(1Cor.12:27,26). Our sins are also against the Christian Community. Serious sin cuts us off from Christ. When the Church had to face the reality of sin in the Body of Christ, it appointed ministers to reconcile sinners, not only with God, but also with the Body of Christ. When a member of the Christian community has separated self from God and the Church, the sinner must go show himself to the priests who have been empowered to reconcile the sinner with the Church, i.e. truly reconcile the sinner to Christ, who reconciles him to God. St. John Chrysostom wrote in the 4th Century:

*The Jewish priests have the power of cleansing from bodily leprosy, or rather in no wise to cleanse, but merely to declare the cleansed to be clean--as against this, our priests receive the power, not merely of declaring an unclean soul to be clean, but for entirely purifying it.*

We see from Acts that baptized people can sin. We read that a certain Simon believed the preaching of Philip and was baptized. He even devoted himself to the minister Philip. When Peter arrived on the scene with discernment of spirits, he discerned the sinfulness of Simon: *“You can have no portion or lot in this affair. Your heart is not steadfastly set on God. Reform your life . . . I see you poisoned with gall and caught in the grip of sin”*(Acts 8:21-23). Peter’s words tell us that not only is sin possible after baptism, but so also are repentance and forgiveness: *“Reform your life!”*

The Didache, one of the earliest Christian writings, tells Christians: *“Confess your offenses in Church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience.”* St. Clement writes around 92 A.D.: *“It is good for a man to confess his failings rather than to harden his heart.”* Tertullian, born around 160 A.D., was one of the strictest Christians about admitting sinners back into the Church. He does recognize the power to do so: *“It must be remembered, however, in regards to that kind of penance which is done after having received the faith--it will be able to obtain pardon from the bishop.”* In 250 A.D. St. Cyprian, a bishop, writes his ministers that if he is away, and there is a case of serious illness--the dying person may make his confession before any minister present *“so that a hand may be imposed upon them in penance and they may come to the Lord in peace.”* Origen, writing around 244 A.D., says that sins are forgiven by baptism, martyrdom, alms giving, converting a sinner, abundance of charity and *“lastly, albeit hard and laborious, the remission of sins through penance; when the sinner washes his pillow in tears . . . and when he does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine...”*

The ideal is to live a sinless life after baptism. The ideal is never to get sick after birth. But bodies get sick, so we need doctors and hospitals. No one likes to go to a hospital as a patient. You do not judge a hospital by how you feel going in, but how you feel coming out. Souls, too, get sick. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the hospital for a sick soul, a sinner. The Confessor is the spiritual doctor empowered to heal sick souls. Origen once wrote this good advice: *“Look carefully around when thou art to confess thy sins. Test carefully the doctor to whom thou art to explain the curse of the disease . . . .”* As healthy people go to see their doctor for a check-up, healthy Catholics go to see their Confessors for spiritual check-ups. The doctor’s eye is trained to catch the first signs of ill health before a disease takes hold and debilitates a person. So the eye of the Confessor is trained to the beginnings of sin that destroy spiritual health. I do not like hospitals! But once I had an aneurysm of the

brain, I was happy for a hospital to go to. After being discharged, I wrote a letter of thanks to the administrator. I do not like to go to confession, but when I experience myself as spiritually alienated from God and Community, I am grateful for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I praise and thank Jesus for the joy it restores to my soul.

## LESSON TWENTY-TWO

### MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

1. How did Jesus demonstrate He possessed the power to forgive sins?
2. What was the reaction of men to the exercise of this power?
3. What act of Jesus made the forgiveness of sins possible?
4. What do you understand by “atonement”?
5. What do we learn from Matthew 18:18?
6. What do we learn from John 20:23?
7. Do the Ministers in the Church have the power to forgive sins or to declare them forgiven?
8. What is meant by the word “baptize”?
9. Why did Jesus command the lepers to go show themselves to the priests?
10. Why is the evil of sin both personal and social?
11. What good can you see in confessing your sins to a Minister of the Church?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.



## CHAPTER 23

### CAN THE CHURCH FORGIVE SINS? - PART I

The Catholic Church faithfully professes that Jesus Christ has given the Church the power to reconcile men to God through the forgiveness of personal sins. One cannot understand this Catholic doctrine without some knowledge of the nature of sin and its forgiveness as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Within the Sacred Scriptures lie the source and foundation of the Catholic doctrine on sin and its forgiveness.

The Book of Genesis teaches the essential nature and effects of sin. In its account, Adam and Eve represent mankind. It begins by relating the story of the idyllic beginning of the human race. Human life begins in close union with the Divine Being. Scriptures symbolically suggests this union in a serene scene of God and Adam and Eve walking and talking in the Garden at the cool of evening. We learn it is of the nature of human beings to dwell in communion with God. Human beings could never truly be themselves separated from God. Genesis relates that this idyllic state ended through the deliberate defiance of God's command by Adam and Eve. The story simply states the deed, but it suggests a catastrophic decision at human nature's deepest level. Mankind freely and willfully rejected God's direction of its life. Mankind desired that independence that would later be expressed in the boast of the King of Assyria: "*By my own power I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am shrewd*"(Is.10:1).

What mankind freely decided, God freely ratified. This decision destroyed a vital and essential relationship. The ensuing separation essentially altered human existence. Humanity disassociated itself from the eternal source of truth and life. Man now possessed these gifts in a limited and diminishing degree. Genesis symbolically teaches humanity's loss of immortality when it describes mankind's being barred from "the tree of life." It verbally expresses the consequences by quoting the words of God's judgment: "*By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return*"(Gen.3:19). And again, "*Then the Lord said: 'My spirit shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. His days shall comprise one hundred and twenty years'*"(Gen.6:3).

After describing mankind's separation from God, Genesis spends the next eight chapters describing the effects upon the earth.

What mankind did is called "sin." According to Genesis, the true essence of sin is mankind's willful rejection of God's authority over its life. Sin produces evil. Evil is negative; it is not a thing but the absence of something that ought to be. The essential and supreme evil is the absence of union between God and mankind. From this evil flow all other evils. Sin produces its own punishment--it causes suffering. Suffering is the pain experienced when a good has been removed from a being. Suffering is evil, and is a result of sin. Genesis teaches that sin upset the entire order of nature. A sin touches not only self but all involved with self. No sin is absolutely personal--each has its social repercussion.

Genesis teaches another truth about sin. In the drama of sin, mankind and God are not the sole protagonists. There is a third party. There is a power outside of man that, because of envy, allures and seduces mankind away from God. We have seen one side of sin--mankind's. There is also God's side. Humanity's rebellion against God implies a rejection of God. The Scriptures speak of a sinner as "spurning" God (Is.1:4). An act is directed against God in which He endures a personal insult and offense. The Old Testament frequently mentions that sin offends, angers, and provokes the wrath of God (Jer.7:18-20). Scripture does not hesitate to say that the wrath of God falls upon sinners. The Old Testament does not hesitate to figuratively picture this wrath as fire and brimstone. Paul speaks of the Wrath of God as an on-going process in this world (Rom.1:18). However, he is not suggesting there is always an angry God in the heavens. Paul gives a more proper interpretation of the Wrath of God when he speaks of it as "abandonment" by God: "*God abandoned them up to their own depraved sense to do what is unseemly*" (Rom.1:28). "*God abandoned them up to their lusts to unclean practices*" (Rom.1:24). St. Stephen expressed this same concept before the Sanhedrin: "*But God turned away from them and abandoned them to worship of the galaxies in the heavens*" (Acts 7:42). By the "wrath of God" is meant that God withdraws from people's lives, leaving them to follow, in a world full of evil, their own chartered courses. From all this we can deduce that if man ever desired to be reunited with God, repentance itself will not "mend the fence." Before there could be "atonement," (at-one-ment), there would have to be reparation. Repentance and reparation would be demanded.

Many Hebrew words express the concept of sin in the Old Testament; the most common term used comes from the verb *hata* (translated *harmatia* in Greek). *Hata*, in the secular sense, means “to miss the mark” or “to fail to attain a goal.” *Hata* invokes the picture of a sinner as a flying arrow that goes astray, dissipating its energy until it falls to the ground, or strikes another causing some degree of harm. As used in the Old Testament, *hata* generally expresses the idea of the failings within a covenant relationship; therefore, sin is an error or fault in a person’s relationship with God or man. Another word for sin is *awon*, translated “iniquity.” It expresses the moral results of sin. It literally means “to be crooked.” It implies something has become “disfigured.” “Iniquity” expresses what ought not to exist in this world. It also says “sin is evil.” Sin is presented not only as an objective wrong, but also as a corruptive force within the sinner, like the rust that eats away a metal vessel (Ez.24:6).

Scripture may speak of sin as *awen*, meaning “trouble,” as in afflictions and sufferings. The sinner makes trouble for himself and others. A sinner is a troublemaker causing trouble. The most serious term for sin in the Old Testament comes from *pasa* meaning “to rebel.” This word is used to express the most serious of sins.

St. Paul often used *harmatia* to express his concept of sin. He conceived sin, not so much as an individual evil deed, but as an evil condition or power within a person that dominates and enslaves a person, keeping him from following the Will of God. When he writes “*the wages of sin is death*,” he is speaking of this state of sin, not of individual sins. This is quite evident from the contents of Chapter Seven of Romans. For Paul, only Jesus Christ can deliver humanity from this enslaving state of sin. When Paul speaks of personal sinful acts, he usually prefers words that express “transgression” or “sinful deeds.”

Some erroneous Christians put all sins on the same level by saying sin is sin. Such a belief is neither intelligent nor scriptural. All sin is evil, but not all evil is of the same degree (evil being the absence of a due good). We have evil on the natural, physical, and moral level. A hailstorm that destroys grain in the field is not as evil as an earthquake that destroys a city. A headache is an evil that cannot be compared with cancer of the lungs. To steal a dime from me is an evil that cannot be compared with stealing a thousand dollars from me. Evil can be measured, in some degree, by the loss of goods or goodness. The Old Testament does not put all sin on the same level. It may not use the

Catholic distinction of “mortal” and “venial,” but it implies the same distinction.

The Old Testament does distinguish between sins. It not only gets down to the sinful act but to the intention as well. The Rabbis distinguished between sins done in ignorance and inadvertence, and sins done in rebellion and insolence. Different punishments are prescribed for different sins. This implies a distinction between the sins committed. We read in Numbers:

*. . . an individual who sins inadvertently, he shall bring a yearling she-goat as a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for him who sinned inadvertently; when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven (Num.15:27).*

*But anyone who sins defiantly (with up-raised hand), . . . insults the Lord, and shall be cut off from among the people. Since he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment, he must be cut off. He has only himself to blame (Num.15:30-31).*

The gravity of sin in the Old Testament is mostly seen through the punishment prescribed. The death penalty is decreed for sins of idolatry, sorcery, adultery and willful murder. These were certainly considered to be “mortally” serious sins. For other serious sins, the Rabbis excommunicated the sinner from the Jewish community. The Jewish Talmud distinguishes between three kinds of sin: sins which are forgiven in this world, sins which are forgiven in the world to come, and sins which are never forgiven. Jesus Christ himself implied a distinction between sins when He taught:

*That, I assure you, is why every sin, every blasphemy, will be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever says anything against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever says anything against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Mt.12:31-32).*

The New Testament clearly teaches that there is “deadly sin” and there is sin that is not “deadly.” We read in First John:

*Anyone who sees his brother sinning, if the sin is not deadly, should petition God, and thus life will be given to the sinner. This is only for those whose sin is not deadly. There is such a thing as a deadly*

*sin; I do not say that one should pray about that. True, all wrongdoing is sin, but not all sin is deadly (1Jn.5:16-17).*

The Old Testament reveals the possibility of sinful mankind's reconciliation with God. God initiated a catholic plan of salvation that culminates with sending His Son into the world as *"the Savior of the world."* A major step in this plan was the establishment of a covenant relationship with the Israelites. Through the Covenant, God willed to make Israel a holy nation. "Holiness" implied a person or thing had been "separated," *hol*, from an unclean environment, and likewise made "pure," *ahor*, for the purpose of being consecrated to the service of Yahweh. Yahweh said to Israel: *"I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to Myself. Therefore, if you hearken to My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My special possession, dearer to Me than all other people, though all the earth is Mine. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"*(Ex.19:4-6). Holiness does not consist merely of being free from sin; that is but an essential condition for holiness. Holiness primarily consists of being in union with God. This union can be achieved *"if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant."*

The sins of the people impeded this union, and therefore we find an elaborate system for removing those sins that made an Israelite "unclean" and unacceptable to Yahweh. Forgiveness of sins was granted as long as one remained within the Covenant. When a person committed a sin deemed to have destroyed his covenant relationship, no forgiveness was available under the covenant. Such sinners were either killed or excommunicated from the community. The Rabbis spoke of their power "to bind and to loose." By this power they excommunicated from the Jewish Community those they judged to be serious sinners. When they judged it proper to do so, they re-admitted them into the community. We see St. Paul exercising this same power when he demanded *"in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"* the expulsion of the incestuous man from the Corinthian Community, and later, when he requested the community to receive an excommunicated person back into the community. King Saul suggested that the prophet Samuel personally possessed the power to forgive his sins: *"Saul replied to Samuel: 'I have sinned, for I have disobeyed the command of the Lord and your instructions . . . . Now forgive my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord'"*(1Sm.15:24-25). Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear there is no forgiveness of sins without repentance. Isaiah says: *"Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy, to our God, who is generous in forgiving"*(Is.55:7). The prophet Hosea implies there are

three actions for reconciliation: repentance, confession, and prayer. He says: *“Return, O Israel, to the Lord, your God; you have collapsed through your guilt. Take with you words, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Forgive all iniquity...’”(Hos.14:2-3).*

In the New Testament John the Baptist proclaimed a *“baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins”(Lk.3:3)*. He demanded, as a sign of repentance, external changes in people’s lives. *“He would say to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him: ‘You brood of vipers! .... Give some evidence that you mean to reform.’... The crowds asked him, ‘What ought we to do?’ In reply He said, ‘Let the man with two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same’”(Lk.3:7-8a,10-11)*. And in Matthew we read: *“They were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sin.”(Mt.3:6)*.

When John beheld Jesus of Nazareth, He said: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”(Jn.1:21)*. The angel said to Joseph, *“You are to name him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins”(Mt.1:21)*. Jesus said to Nicodemus: *“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him”(Jn.3:17)*. People in Samaria said: *“We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this really is the Savior of the world”(Jn.4:42)*. Jesus explained his vocation as, *“I have come to call sinners, not the self righteous”(Mk.2:17)*. We read in Matthew 9:10, *“...those known as sinners came to join Jesus and his disciples.”* The life and the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be disassociated from sinners and the problem of sin.

Jesus can do something about this problem. The Father sent the Son to save sinners, and He came with the power to do what no other man could do. Jesus possessed the power to forgive sins. We read that one day some men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus. *“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, ‘My son, your sins are forgiven’”(Mk.2:5)*. These words scandalized certain bystanders who thought: *“Why does this man talk in that way? He commits blasphemy! Who can forgive sins except God alone?”(Mk.2:7)*. True, only God can forgive sins. However, God has willed to forgive sins, and willed to do so through the sacred humanity of Jesus. Those scandalized bystanders believed illness resulted from sin and could not be cured unless first the sin was forgiven. And so Jesus said: *“That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (he said to the paralyzed man), ‘I command you: Stand up! Pick up your mat and go home.’ He*

*did as commanded”(Mk.2:6-12). Matthew recorded this crowd’s reaction: “At the sight, a feeling of awe came over the crowd, and they praised God for giving such authority to men”(Mt.9:8). (Note Matthew’s use of the plural “men”!) To the penitent woman Jesus said: “Your sins are forgiven”(Lk.7:48). The Scriptures teach that the absolution from sin flows from Jesus’ death on the Cross. At the Last Supper Jesus said: “For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” First Peter speaks of man’s redemption “by Christ’s blood beyond all price: the blood of a spotless, unblemished lamb”(1Pt.1:19).*

Jesus said to the Apostles: “Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth...”(Mt.28:18). “As the Father has sent me, so I send you”(Jn.20:21). Jesus had been sent to reconcile sinners to God by forgiving their sins and teaching them the Way to union with God. The Apostles must now continue this work and so Jesus empowers them to do so. “Then He breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men’s sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound’”(Jn.20:22-23). By the authorization of Jesus Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the Church, through the Apostles, received the power to forgive the sins of men. To Peter, Jesus said, “I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven”(Mt.16:19). Jesus gave to the Apostle not only the power to forgive sins, but also the power to expel unrepentant sinners from the community. Speaking about the case of an unrepentant brother who injured another brother, Jesus instructs:

*...refer it to the church. If he ignores even the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. I assure you, whatever you declare bound on earth shall be held bound in heaven, and whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be held loosed in heaven (Mt.18:17-18).*

Fully empowered by Jesus, the Apostles are commissioned:

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world! (Mt.28:19-20).*

**This is the case as the Bible states it. This is why the Catholic Church faithfully professes that Jesus Christ has given the Church the power to reconcile men to God through the forgiveness of personal sins. As with her Lord, the life and ministry of the Church cannot be disassociated from sinners and the problem of sin!**

**Over seventeen hundred years ago Lactantius (250-317 A.D.), a Christian teacher, made this observation:**

*Since many heresies have come about, and because the people of God have been cut apart at the instigation of demons, the truth must be briefly marked out by us, and must be placed within its own proper domicile... Let it be known: that is the true Church in which there is confession and penance, and which takes a salubrious care of the sins and wounds to which the weak flesh is subject” (The Divine Institutions 4, 30, 1).*

**In our next article we will discuss how the power to forgive sins was understood and used within the Church.**



## LESSON TWENTY-THREE

### CAN THE CHURCH FORGIVE SINS?—PART I

1. What is the essential nature of sin?
2. What is the essential effect of sin?
3. How would you define “evil”?
4. How did the Old Testament describe sin?
5. What do we learn about sin in Chapter 15 of Numbers?
6. What do we learn about sin from First John 5:16-17?
7. How would you distinguish between a “mortal” sin and a “venial” sin?
8. Why did God establish a Covenant with mankind?
9. What is the meaning of “holiness” in the Old Testament?
10. How does a person become holy?
11. How did the Rabbis understand the power “to bind and to loose”?
12. What is the essential condition for the forgiveness of sins?
13. What is the work of the Church in the world?
14. What power does the Church need to accomplish this work?

If you have any Questions on this lesson, please list them on the back.

## CHAPTER 24

### CAN THE CHURCH FORGIVE SINS? – PART II

From the Sacred Scriptures we learn the true nature and the consequence of sin. Sin is essentially defiance of God concretely expressed by a person who refuses to abide by the commandments of God. The essential evil of sin is separation from God. A person can be partially or completely separated from God. Sin depends on the deed done, the degree of awareness of evil, and the degree of will involved. When a human being with full conscious awareness, willfully and defiantly, completely rejects God's rule over his life, a "permanent" separation occurs between that person and God. The person becomes dead to God. If the human heart becomes "hardened" towards God, the person may experience the "Wrath of God." The Wrath of God is the abandonment by God. God withdraws, to a degree, from the life of the person, leaving the person to experience human existence without the presence of God's grace. If this state becomes permanent by death, it is called Hell.

From the Sacred Scriptures we learn how the People of God dealt with sin and sinners within the Church. If the sin was considered an "iniquitous" deed detrimental to the covenant relationship, the sinner was put to death. For certain serious sins, the sinner was cut off from the Community. The excommunication symbolized the sinner's separation from God. Excommunication protected the Community from the evil influence of the sinner, and removed a contaminating element from the People of God called to holiness. Hopefully, excommunication would benefit the sinner also. In this separation from the Community, the sinner could experience alienation and loneliness. This experience could symbolize the deeper and more terrible alienation from God. It was hoped that, through excommunication, the sinner would come to a conscious awareness of the evilness of sin, and repent.

The Sacred Scriptures also revealed that people commit sins "inadvertently." Evil could be done without really giving thought to it, without conscious awareness of the evilness of the act, without a clear understanding of God's commandment. Such sins were judged not to have cut the sinner completely off from God. However such sins did make a person "unholy" and unfit to approach God in worship. The Old Testament encouraged the confession of

these sins: *“whoever is guilty in any of these cases shall confess the sin he has incurred”*(Lv.5:5). It also prescribed certain sacrifices and rituals for atonement. When completed, the person could once again worship God within the Church. It was of such sins as these that the Apostle John wrote: *“But if we acknowledge our sins, He who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong. If we say, ‘We have never sinned,’ we make Him a liar and His word finds no place in us”*(1Jn.1:9-10).

The Christian Church received the power, through Jesus Christ, to reconcile sinners to God. Bishop Firmilian of Caesarea wrote to Saint Cyprian in 268 A.D.: *“. . . the power of forgiving sins was given to the Apostles and to the Churches which these men, sent by Christ, established; and to the bishops who succeeded them by being ordained in their place.”* In the exercise of this power, the Church would have looked to the Old Testament, to Jewish custom, and to the example of Jesus Christ. The words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians well expressed the Church’s thoughts on the forgiveness of sin:

*The old order has passed away; now all is new! All this has been done by God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean that God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to Himself not counting men’s transgressions against them, and that He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors for Christ, God as it were, appealing through us. We implore you, in Christ’s name: be reconciled to God!”*(2Cor.5:17-20).

As “ambassadors for Christ” the Apostles were fully empowered to act in His Name. They knew they were empowered to forgive sins.

The Church primarily exercised this ministry through the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism means “washing,” and it was a ritual washing that removed all the sins of repentant sinners who professed their faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism was an initiation ceremony into the Christian Community that simultaneously removed sin and bestowed the Gift of the Holy Spirit and Sanctifying Grace. As a representative of the Christian Community, the minister of Baptism is empowered, through the Holy Trinity, to remove the sins of the person being baptized and incorporate them into the Body of Christ--the Church. The baptizing minister says: *“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”* “In the name of” means “by the power of.” If anyone says the Church cannot forgive sins through its ministers, such a person denies the power of the Church to baptize. Later St.

Ambrose of Milan (390 A.D.) would ask: *“Why do you baptize if sins cannot be forgiven through men? Certainly in baptism there is forgiveness of all sins. What difference does it make then whether priests claim this right, which has been given to them, by arguing from baptism or from the penitential discipline?”* (On Penance 1, 8).

The majority of all references of forgiveness of sins in the New Testament apply to sin before Baptism. Since sin, unfortunately, did not cease at baptism, the ministry of reconciliation did not cease with baptism. However, the evidence of serious sin within the Christian Community came as a shock to the Community. Membership in the Church followed an adult conversion experience in which Christians *“tasted the heavenly gifts,”* became *“sharers in the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come”*(Heb.6:4-5). The Christian Church recognized itself as a *“holy people,”* *“a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”*(1Pt.2:5). Sin should not be found among such a membership: *“As for lewd conduct or promiscuousness of lust of any sort, let them not even be mentioned among you; your holiness forbids this”*(Eph.5:3). When it was found, it came as a shock and scandal. When Simon Peter discovered the lying deceit of two members of the Jewish Community, Ananias and Sapphira, he dramatically *“excommunicated”* them permanently from the Church. God symbolized through Peter’s action that the Christian Community was to be a holy body. After this *“excommunication”* we read: *“Great fear came on the whole church and all who heard of it”*(Acts 5:11).

This incident occurred in a Christian Community grounded within Old Testament spirituality. With the passing of years many men and women entered the Church from backgrounds of paganism. The Church had to develop the spiritual foundation of these people. An excellent example of this is Paul’s work among the Corinthians. When the serious sin of incest occurred within the Corinthian Church, Paul exercised his power of excommunication. Paul wrote: *“As for me, though absent in body, I am present in spirit, and have already passed sentence in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the man who did this deed. United in spirit with you and empowered by our Lord Jesus, I hand him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord”*(1Cor.5:3-5). Paul’s words to the Corinthians imply that excommunication ought to be extended to other sinful members within the Community: *“What I really wrote about was your not associating with anyone who bears the title ‘brother’ if he is immoral, covetous, an idolater, an abusive person, a drunkard, or a thief. It is clear that you must not eat with such*

a man . . . . ‘Expel the wicked man from your midst’”(1Cor.5:11-13). Paul later encouraged the Corinthians to receive back a repentant sinner: “*The punishment already inflicted by the majority on such a one is enough; you should now relent and support him so that he may not be crushed by too great a weight of sorrow. I therefore beg you to reaffirm your love for him*”(2Cor. 2:6-8). If the Church admitted a sinner back into the Community, that was, within its eyes, equivalent to reconciliation with Jesus Christ and therefore with God.

The Church recognized it possessed the power to reconcile sinners who sinned after baptism. When it came to those “sins of weakness,” perhaps to which St. John made reference, reconciliation occurred within the Christian Liturgy. St. James writes: “*Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord . . . . If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his. Hence, declare your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may find healing*”(Jas.5:14-16). Here we have an example in the Scriptures of members of the Church being encouraged to confess sins in order to receive the prayers of others and “find healing.” We read in the Didache, an early Christian work: “*Confess your sins in the assembly and do not come to your prayers with a guilty conscience.*”

In the very early Church, the reception of the Holy Eucharist was held to purify the repentant sinner of sin. St. Cyprian who lived around 258 A.D. wrote: “*When we have drunk the saving Cup of the Lord’s Blood . . . the breast that was heavy and sad and oppressed by its tormenting sins is set free in the joy of the divine compassion.*” Later St. John Damascene (645-749) wrote: “*For those who partake worthily and with faith, it is for the remission of sins and for life everlasting, and a safeguard to soul and body.*” Such sins were also remitted through acts of charity and other good works. St. James tells us: “*Remember this: the person who brings a sinner back from his way will save his soul from death and cancel a multitude of sins*”(Jas.5:20).

As the Church moved into a time of persecution, it took a very hard stand against the sin of apostasy--abandoning the Christian Faith. The author of Hebrews maintained that, under certain conditions as listed by him (Heb. 6:4-7), this sin placed people beyond repentance and salvation. The Church knew it possessed the power to forgive serious sin, but the burning issue of the early Church was whether the Church should exercise this power and if so, how often in the case of a sinner. The general decision of the Church was that it should be done *only once* in a lifetime. The fear being that, if permitted more

than once, it encouraged sin and mocked the mercy of God. A “second repentance” after baptism was generally accepted within the Church. Under this condition the Sacrament of Reconciliation assumed this general form: the sinner confessed to the bishop who enrolled him in the Order of Penitents; a method and time of penance was prescribed--the time was often years; when the prescribed penance was completed, the penitent sinner knelt publicly before the bishop who laid hands upon the sinner and received the person back into full communion with the Christian Community.

During this time there developed the practice of penitents seeking out Christians about to be martyred for the Faith. They besought letters from the martyrs to their bishop stating that the martyrs would intercede for the sinners in Heaven, or offer their death for them. With such letters the bishops became “indulgent” and often accepted the sinners back immediately into the Church. This practice became the historical foundation for the later Church granting indulgences.

We need to keep in mind that the penance and the time was not to atone for sins but first, to prove the sincerity of the sinner and second, to help the sinner grow in the needed discipline and virtue to avoid this serious sin in the future. Remember, the general rule of the Church was *only one* second repentance. If the person relapsed into this sin after “second repentance,” the Church permitted no reconciliation. For the common good of the Christian Community they were not reconciled. They were left to the Mercy of God. Even into the ninth century the Church of Rome knew no practice other than one second repentance.

A letter of St. Cyprian of Carthage expressed well the general sentiments of the early Church. The letter was occasioned by the fact that Therapius had readmitted Victor, formerly a presbyter, to the Christian Community. Cyprian maintained this had been done rashly—*“before he had done full penance . . . before the full and lawful time of satisfaction, without the request nor even the awareness of the people, and with no pressing illness nor any compelling necessity . . . Still, we do not think that peace, once granted in whatever way by a priest of God, should be taken away; and for this reason we have allowed Victor to avail himself of the Communion granted him.”*

Up to the time of Constantine, sin was viewed in the Church more from the point of view of breaking one’s covenant relationship with God. At the time of Constantine a change occurred in the general attitude towards the Sacrament

of Reconciliation. At this time bishops of the Church became civil judges within the Community. In many cases the laws of the land were synonymous with the laws of God. Sinners became civil criminals and penances became sentences of justice--reparation demanded under the law. From this time the Sacrament of Reconciliation became viewed more from a juridical point of view. The sinner looked upon himself or herself more as a person who had broken a law rather than a covenant relationship with God. Under such a juridical concept, the number of sins and their circumstances became essentially important. There was more emphasis placed upon satisfying the Justice of God rather than experiencing the Mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Later there grew, within the Church, a clearer distinction between “public” sins and “private” sins. It came to be generally accepted that public sins demanded public reconciliation and private sins demanded private reconciliation. However, the general practice of only one public repentance persisted.

The Confession of Sins that became the general practice and custom of the Catholic Church in later centuries was born among the Celtic monks of Ireland. These monks practiced the custom of confessing their sins privately to other monks who gave them both a penance and absolution. Books of prescribed penances for specific sins came into being. This practice among the monks spread beyond the monastery and was soon generally accepted in all Europe. Serious public sins were still dealt with by excommunication, and private and lesser public sins were dealt with through private confession to a priest.

The Council of Trent defended this practice and the Protestant Reformers generally rejected it. However, neither Luther nor Calvin completely rejected private confession of sins. Both saw the value in the practice. Nevertheless, they denied the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be a Sacrament instituted within the Church by Jesus Christ.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recognized the fact that the Sacrament of Penance had changed in the past and could change in the future. However, they said nothing about the direction this change would take. Most Catholics recognize that the attitude of Catholics towards the Confession of sins has changed.

Perhaps the direction and attitude of the Church today is best indicated in the teaching of the confession of sins as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This title brings to mind that Christians have entered into a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. Our sins, the confession of our sins, and our repentance ought to be seen in the light of personal commitment to Jesus Christ, not only for what this means personally, but what it means to the entire Christian Community. The “signs of the time” appear to indicate that, in the future, the confession of sins will be more concerned with the communal aspect of sin and confession, and there will be greater concern about the conversion of the heart.



## LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

### CAN THE CHURCH FORGIVE SINS? – PART II

1. How did the Old Testament deal with serious sin?
2. What is the purpose of “excommunication”?
3. How did the Old Testament deal with sins committed “inadvertently”?
4. What does it mean for the Apostles to be “ambassadors for Christ”?
5. What occurs in the Sacrament of Baptism?
6. When faced with serious sin in the Christian Community, what did St. Paul encourage the Church to do?
7. How were lesser sins dealt with in the early Church?
8. What was meant in the early Church by only one “second repentance”?
9. In what way did the attitude towards sin change in the Church from the time of Constantine?
10. What was the distinction between “public” and “private” sin?
11. What do you understand by the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
12. When should a Catholic receive this Sacrament?

If you have any Questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 25

### CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The teaching of Jesus Christ on marriage was revolutionary for His time and culture. The words recorded in the Gospel of Mark come closest to His original teaching: *“At the beginning of creation God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore let no man separate what God has joined. But in the house again, the disciples began to question him about this. He told them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries commits adultery’”(Mk.10:6-12).* This teaching of Jesus implies the indissolubility of marriage.

Even before the time of Christ, marriage had become, in the Old Testament, a sacred symbol of the Covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Is.54:5-8). This inspired St. Paul to see Christian Marriage as a symbol of the holy union existing between Jesus Christ and the Christian Community. Paul taught:

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church. He gave himself up for her to make her holy . . . Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Observe that no one ever hates his own flesh; no, he nourishes it and takes care of it as Christ cares for the church--for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be made into one.’ This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church. In any case, each one should love his wife as he loves himself, the wife for her part showing respect for her husband”(Eph.5:25-33).*

Paul compared the union of husband and wife with the union of Jesus Christ and the Church. Christian marriage becomes the symbol of the New Covenant relationship between Jesus and the New Israel. It visibly symbolizes the love of Jesus for Christian Community, and its reciprocal response of respect and obedience. By declaring Christian Marriage to be such a sacred symbol, the Scriptures simultaneously define the quality of marital union within the

marriage. It commits the Christian couple to actually becoming this sacred symbol of love in the world. It becomes the unique vocation of the Christian couple to show forth, through the loving union of their lives, the unique union of Christ with His Church. In actual fact, Christian couples cause to come to be what they symbolize. By truly living their vocation, they become God's Presence to each other, to their children, and to the Community. Their lives express fidelity, generous sharing of self, and forgiveness.

Such a vocation could not be realized without a special Presence of the Holy Spirit operative within the lives of both man and woman. Only the Holy Spirit empowers the husband to love his wife with Christ-like devotion. Only the same Holy Spirit enables the wife to respond to this love with respect and obedience. Married couples, who open their lives to the power of the Holy Spirit, continue the incarnating work of making God's love visible within the human dimension. Their loving words and deeds truly give "flesh and blood" to God's love. The Second Vatican Council speaks of marriage being a union between the *christifideles*--between two people faithful to Jesus Christ. Truly, when Christian Marriage fails, the whole Christian Community fails. The fidelity of the Community to Christ becomes suspect.

The Fathers of the early Church, in the spirit of St. Paul, continued to confirm the sacredness of Christian marriage. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote to St. Polycarp around 110 A.D.: *"Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be content with their husbands in body and soul. In like manner, exhort my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church . . . . It is proper for men and women who wish to marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, so that their marriage will be acceptable to the Lord, and not entered upon for the sake of lust. Let all things be done for the honor of God."*

Writing around 200 A.D. Tertullian asked: *"How shall we suffice for the telling of that happiness of that marriage which the Church arranges, which the sacrifice strengthens, on which the blessing sets a seal, which the angels proclaim, and which has the Father's approval?" (To My Wife).*

In his commentaries on Matthew, Origen (244 A.D.) speaks of the "grace" of marriage: *"Certainly it is God who joins two in one, so that when He marries a woman to a man, there are no longer two. And since it is God who joins them, there is in this joining a grace for those who are joined by God. Paul knew this, and he said that just as holy celibacy was a grace, so also was marriage,*

*according to the Word of God, a grace. He says, 'I would that all men were like myself; but each has his own grace from God, one in this way, another in that.'*"

St. Clement of Alexandria (202 A.D.) commented: *"If the Law is sacred, then marriage is a holy estate"* (*Commentary on St. Matthew*). In a letter to Bishop Vigilus in 385 A.D., St. Ambrose stressed the importance of Christian Faith in marriage: He asks, *"How is it possible to speak of a marriage where there is no agreement in faith?"*

In his commentary on St. Luke, Ambrose condemns divorce: *"You dismiss your wife as though you had a right to do this because the human law does not forbid it. But the law of God does forbid it. You should be standing in fear of God, but instead you obey human rulers. Listen to the word of God, whom those who make the laws are supposed to obey: 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.'"*

St. Augustine, the famous convert of St. Ambrose, explicitly emphasized marriage to be a Sacrament. On his commentary on St. John's Gospel, he wrote: *"Having been invited, the Lord came to the marriage in order to affirm conjugal chastity and to show that marriage is a Sacrament."* On his treatise "The Advantage of Marriage," Augustine wrote: *"Among all nations and all men, therefore, the advantage of marriage is for the sake of begetting offspring and in the fidelity of chastity. In the case of the people of God, however, there is also the holiness of the Sacrament."* In the same treatise Augustine emphasized the permanence of marriage and compared it to priestly ordination:

*The marriage bond is loosed only by the death of a spouse. It is just as if an ordination of the clergy took place in order to gather the people together, and the people did not in fact assemble in a congregation; still, the Sacrament of ordination would remain in those ordained; and if, perhaps someone is removed from office because of some fault, he will not lack the Sacrament of the Lord once it has been imposed, though now it remains to his judgment.*

Augustine wrote at another time:

*Between the living spouses there remains a certain conjugal bond, which neither separation nor union with another can take away. It remains, however, for the injury of crime, and not for the bond of covenant. So it is with the soul of an apostate. Even though its faith is cast aside in withdrawing, as it were, from its*

*marriage with Christ, it does not lose the Sacrament of its faith (Baptism), which it received in the bath of regeneration. The apostate retains the Sacrament even after his apostasy; but now it is for the aggravation of his punishment and not for his meriting a reward.*

In his commentary on St. John's Gospel, St. Cyril of Alexandria observed around 429 A.D.: *"When the wedding was celebrated at Cana, it is clear that it was entirely decorous; for indeed, the Mother of the Savior was there; and, invited along with His disciples, the Savior, too, was there, working miracles--especially that He might sanctify the very beginnings of human generation."*

The Roman Catholic Church of today completely agrees with Ambrose and Augustine on divorce and remarriage, but for a time they may have represented a vocal minority in the Christian Community. Certain Christians contended that Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce represented an absolute idealism for Christian life, and a goal not always obtainable in the concrete human situation. Between Christian idealism and concrete Christian reality a hiatus existed.

True Christians cannot fail to experience the tension caused by what they presently are and what their Christian vocation calls them to be. This tension permeates the whole of Christian experience. Nevertheless there have existed always "marvels of grace" within the Church witnessing to the fact that the ideal was possible. These men and women encourage the majority of Christians to struggle continuously against opposition, and never settle for mediocrity or moral failure.

Within this majority the Church needed to produce a sense of sin, guilt, and even fear--but never despair. In whatever situation people find themselves, the Church must still appear as savior. Christians who disdain and despise the sinful members of our society do so at a risk of alienation from Jesus Christ, who had compassion upon sinners. Jesus came to call and save sinners. He made an accusation against "religious" people of His day that we would not want laid at our door: *"They bind up heavy loads, hard to carry, to lay on other men's shoulders, while they themselves will not lift a finger to budge them"*(Mt.23:4).

Throughout its history, the Catholic Church has stood firm against adultery, and confirmed the Scripture teaching: *"Let marriage be honored in every way and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and*

*adulterers*”(Heb.13:4). However, what actually constitutes the sin of adultery has not always been clear and constant. In the Old Testament, the sin of adultery was seen as a violation of the property rights of another man. This sin occurred when a man had sexual intercourse with a married woman. A married man did not commit adultery by having sexual relationships with a single woman, or a widow, or a divorced woman. Because good Jews desired to avoid the sin of adultery, the question of legitimate divorce was extremely important. Deuteronomy permitted divorce: *“When a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house...”*(Dt.24:1).

The real moral problem was how to interpret “something indecent.” Two schools of thought existed at the time of Christ. Rabbi Shammai interpreted “some thing indecent” strictly to mean sexual impurity, while Rabbi Hillel interpreted the phrase loosely to mean something “displeasing” in one’s wife. When the Pharisees asked Jesus: *“Whether it was permissible for a husband to divorce his wife?”* Jesus responded, *“Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of your hearts.”* At this point Jesus gave His teaching absolutely forbidding divorce. When Matthew recorded this incident in his Gospel account, the words *“lewd conduct is a separate case”* were added. The word translated “lewd conduct” came from the Greek *porneia*, meaning “sexual immorality.” Some see the addition of the “lewd conduct” phrase as the early Church’s interpretation of Jesus’ teaching as it appeared in Mark. It appears to interpret Jesus’ teaching in the light of the Shammnai School. Certain Christians interpret this to mean a Christian could divorce one’s partner for adultery and remarry within the Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church has consistently maintained this interpretation.

The Christian Community interpreted St. Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7:10-16 as granting a newly baptized Christian permission to divorce a pagan spouse who was hostile to Christian conversion, and the right to contract a Christian marriage. Paul wrote that if any Christian had a husband or wife who was an unbeliever, but consented to live with the Christian, the Christian must not divorce the non-Christian. However, he writes: *“If the unbeliever wishes to separate, however, let him (or her) do so. The believing husband or wife is not bound in such case. God has called you to live in peace.”* This was seen as an exercise on Paul’s part of the power “to bind and loose” given to the Church by Christ. This was a legal exercise of this power since no sacramental bond of

marriage existed between the married couple. This is called “the Pauline Privilege” within the Church.

In later centuries, the Church would also dissolve certain marriages between Christians and non-Christians by the same power--this being called “The Petrine Privilege.” The difference between the former and the latter is that in the first case both were non-Christian at the time of marriage, and in the second incident only one person was non-Christian and the other Christian at the time of the marriage. In the latter cases, as in the former, no sacramental bond existed. The Church teaches that for the sacramental bond of marriage to exist both parties must be baptized. The church holds the sacramental marriage to be indissoluble.

Apparently from church history, it appears that in certain times and places, Christian marriages were not seen as sacramental, but merely as legal and moral contracts that could be dissolved for such grave reasons as adultery. The Christian writer Lactantius writes around 310 A.D.: “*He is an adulterer, who married a woman divorced from her husband, or who divorced a wife on account of any crime except adultery, so that he might marry another*” (*The Divine Institutions*). The Irish councils in the seventh century permitted husbands of unfaithful wives to remarry, and if one spouse allowed the other to enter the service of God in a monastery or convent, he or she was free to remarry. In the same century Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, permitted a husband to divorce an adulterous wife and marry again, and he permitted the wife to remarry after five years of penance. In the eighth century, the Council of Compiègne allowed women whose husbands contracted leprosy to remarry with their husband’s consent.

However by the time of St. Thomas of Aquinas in the thirteenth century, with the revival of the works of St. Augustine, the sacramental aspect of Christian marriage became widely promulgated throughout the Church. The Council of Florence in 1439 listed marriage as one of the seven sacraments of the Church, and defined it as a sacred symbol of the union of Christ and the Church. It granted legal separations in cases of marital infidelity but not remarriage. The Council decreed: “*The bond of marriage lawfully contracted is perpetual.*” However, Church courts were now empowered to grant annulments to those Christians who could prove their present marriages to be invalid, as not being lawfully contracted.

The Catholic Church grants only annulments and not divorces. An annulment is an official declaration that no real marriage existed in the first instance. The Code of Canon Law explicitly spelled out the conditions for a valid marriage, and thereby the grounds for nullity. Since the Second Vatican Council, these conditions have now been broadened to take into consideration disorders and deficiencies of the human personality. *“Reasons for annulling a marriage (presently) now include: lack of discretion (the parties did not really understand what they were committing themselves to), lack of partnership in conjugal life, lack of conjugal love, psychopathic personality, schizophrenia, affective immaturity, psychic incompetence, sociopathic personality, ‘moral impotence,’ lack of interpersonal communication”* (Catholicism, Richard P. McBrien).

In 1978 the Orthodox-Roman Catholics issued this *Agreed Statement on the Sanctity of Marriage*: *“Marriage is the fundamental relationship in which a man and woman, by total sharing with each other, seek their own growth in holiness and that of their children, and thus show forth the presence on earth of God’s kingdom.”* However, it stated that the Orthodox Church continues to permit divorce and tolerates remarriages *“in order to avoid further human tragedies.”*

The great number of divorces within the Christian Community and its number of annulments continue to witness not only to our failure as Christians, but also to our failure as human beings. *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples: your love for one another”* (Jn.13:35).



## LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

### CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

1. Why does Jesus teach marriage to be indissoluble?
2. What does Christian marriage symbolize in this world?
3. According to St. Paul, how should love be expressed by a couple in a Christian marriage?
4. How would you describe the unique vocation of a Christian couple in the world?
5. What does St. Ambrose teach about divorce?
6. What does St. Augustine teach about marriage?
7. What does he teach about divorce?
8. According to St. Matthew, for what reason may a person legitimately divorce his or her marriage partner?
9. Does this give the person the right to remarry?
10. What do you understand by the Pauline Privilege?
11. What do you understand by the Petrine Privilege?
12. What is meant by an annulment of a marriage?
13. Why does the Greek Orthodox Church permit divorce?
14. What does the number of divorces and annulments among Christians indicate?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them here.

## CHAPTER 26

### THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

On the road to Damascus Saint Paul discovered one of the most beautiful doctrines of the Christian Faith. The Risen Jesus Christ appeared to Paul and asked him one question: "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*" Paul inquired: "*Who are you, sir?*" He heard in reply: "*I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting*"(Acts 9:4-5). During the historical life of Jesus, Saul had not been present in Jerusalem. He had not known Jesus in the flesh. And yet, Jesus accused Saul of personally persecuting Him. Saul personally persecuted the disciples of Jesus. Jesus identified Himself with each of His disciples to such a degree that He declared what was done to them was done to Him. Jesus revealed to Paul the intimate union existing between Himself and His disciples. This was Paul's first introduction into the great mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ from which flows the beautiful doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Hereafter, Paul would frequently refer to the members of the Christian Community as "saints." The word "saint" comes from the Greek *hagios*. It denotes an object of awe or reverence--something distinctly different from everything else. It carries the connotation of being "purified" and "immaculate." This word was used to describe the innermost nature of God. Our English word "holy" seeks to convey this same meaning. Calling the Christians "saints" appears to signify they were persons purified of sin who possessed an intimacy with the very Person of God.

While Jesus lived on this earth, His great Spirit animated only His Sacred Humanity. Scripture reveals that after the death of Jesus, His Spirit was poured out upon the body of believers. At Pentecost, this community of believers became a corporate body animated by the Holy Spirit. Members of this body became a New Creation--the Mystical Body of Christ. They became an extension of the glorified Jesus Christ's own life. This Mystical Body of Christ has been called "the Church" and "the Kingdom of God." It is composed of all those redeemed and sanctified by the grace of Christ, whether living on earth or deceased. To this list, St. Augustine adds all the just from the beginning of the world for they, too, have Christ as their Head.

St. John Chrysostom taught around 391 A.D.: *“Anyone who has the Spirit does not only belong to Christ, but He has Christ Himself; for wherever One Person of the Trinity is present, the whole Trinity is present.”* St. Hilary of Poitiers wrote around 356 A.D.: *“We are all spiritual men, if the Spirit of God is in us. But this Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. And since the Spirit of Christ is in us, the Spirit of Him also who raised Christ from the dead is in us--We are vivified, therefore, on account of the Spirit of Christ’s dwelling in us through Him that raised Christ from the dead.”*

St. Paul came to the deepest understanding of this great “mystery of Christ”--and he shares his deep wisdom with us: *“So too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another”(Rom.12:5). “...Christ cares for the Church--for we are members of his body”(Eph.5:29-30). “You, then, are the body of Christ. Everyone of you is a member of it”(1Cor.12:27).*

What does it mean for the individual to become part of the Body of Christ? That individual person becomes a new creation--freed of sin and filled with divine life. The author of the letter of Barnabas—perhaps written as early as 70 A.D.--writes:

*“Before we believed in God the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak, like a temple truly built with hands, because it was full of idolatry and, through doing things contrary to God, it was a house of demons. ‘But it shall be built in the name of the Lord’--When we received the remission of sins and set our hope in the Name, we were made new and were created again from the beginning. Now God truly dwells in us, in the habitation which we are--Himself dwelling in us.”*

Writing around 350 A.D., St. Cyril of Jerusalem tells us: *“And if your piety is unfeigned, the Holy Spirit will come down upon you also, and from on high a paternal voice will sound over you; not, ‘This is My Son,’ but ‘This is now become my son.’--You have sonship, not by nature, but have received it by adoption.”* In a sense, we can say the Child Jesus begins His life anew in the soul of the newly baptized. The soul of the baptized becomes as pure in the eye of God as the pure soul of the Christ Child. As the Christ Child *“grew in grace and wisdom before God and man,”* so ought the newly baptized. As the earthly life of Jesus merited grace and atoned for sin, so ought the life of a Christian be meritorious and reparatory.

The work of Jesus goes on in the Mystical Body of Jesus. What Jesus once accomplished during His earthly life He continues to accomplish through His Mystical Body. Christians who understand, as Paul did, “the mystery of Christ,” realize that their sufferings fill up the suffering lacking in the body of Christ. They understand that Jesus continues to redeem the world through them. Paul perhaps was the first to understand and teach this great revelation:

*Even now I find my joy in my suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body, the Church” (Col.1:24).*

*“As we have shared much in the suffering of Christ, so through Christ do we share abundantly in his consolation” (2Cor.1:5).*

*“I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death. Thus do I hope that I may arrive at resurrection from the dead” (Phil.3:10-11).*

Paul speaks of his sufferings filling up what is lacking in the Body of Christ. This very mysterious, and deep thought cannot imply that anything was lacking in the personal life of Jesus Christ Himself, but rather, in some way, the work of redemption continues through the Church. We believe that Jesus’ life and death atoned for the sins of men, and merited all grace necessary for salvation. Yet, Jesus calls His disciples into a close intimate union--to the degree they are to share His life and death. The disciples become extensions of Jesus’ own life. Jesus continues His life on earth in them. Jesus still teaches, preaches, heals, forgives, feeds the multitude, raises the dead, suffers and dies in His disciples. Any work accomplished by a member of the Church, under grace, is a work accomplished by Jesus. Nothing done by the Mystical Body of Christ can detract from Jesus. All good done by the saints glorifies Jesus because it manifests the Spirit of Jesus. Those who truly understand the “mystery of Christ,” as explained by Paul, are not restricted to viewing the Person of Jesus within the narrow confines of His earthly existence, but behold the grandeur of the portrait of the Person of the Glorified Jesus in His Church. The Mystical Body of Christ is the picture of Jesus in Glory.

Just as the life of Jesus merited and atoned during His earthly life, the Spirit of Jesus continues to merit and atone in the lives of the blessed on earth. What

Jesus accomplished once through one human nature, He now continues to accomplish through countless blessed human beings. But because these human beings are individuals created by God in the freedom of human will, as they daily freely cooperate with the Spirit of Jesus within them, they personally grow, day by day, in personal holiness. Their lives take on a Christ-like dimension.

In the eyes of God, the good they do has meritorious value. God attributes this merit to them as if they were the sole source of the good work. They become channels of grace within the Christian Community. They become sources of spiritual power with the Church. Their graces support the weaker members of the Church, and aid the Church in reaching its full maturity in Christ. St. Basil the Great writes (375 A.D.):

*to each who receives the Spirit it is as if he alone received Him... Shining upon those who are cleansed of every blemish, He renders them spiritual in a communion with Himself. Just as a sunbeam, falling on light and transparent bodies, makes them exceedingly bright and causes them to pour forth a brilliance from themselves, so too souls which bear the Spirit and which are illuminated by the Spirit become spiritual themselves and send forth grace to others.*

In his work on the Mystical Body of Christ, Pope Pius XII tells us: “*The salvation of many souls depends upon the prayers and voluntary mortifications offered from that intention by the members of the Mystical Body of Christ . . . . Let our common pleading rise daily to Heaven for all the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.*”

The church on earth still remains in an imperfect state. It is imperfect in its members for they still fall into sin. It is imperfect in the sense of lacking its full maturity. The Church on earth is in a continual process of growing to full maturity in Christ. Just as the historical Jesus Christ grew in age and wisdom before God and man, so must the Mystical Christ--the Church. God has willed that the sufferings, the good works of the members of the Church--done in union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit--atone for the sins in the Mystical Body, fill up what is lacking, and merit grace for the increased growth and development of members of the Church. The good deeds of the saints hasten that day when the Church will stand before God as the perfect bride of Christ.

Between the members of the Church--between the frail and the strong, between the sinners and the saints--the closest interpersonal relationship exists. St. Paul expressed this when he wrote: *"If one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it. If one part is given special honor, all parts enjoy it. Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it"*(1Cor.12:26). No one and truly be a living member of the Church--whether in heaven or on earth--and remain a person isolated and separated from the rest. As living members of the Church, we will never experience the poverty of a mere individual, but we forever share in the richness of the Mystical Body. St. Thomas teaches that the treasures of Christ's own merits become ours, as if we had merited them; the merits of the saints in heaven are at our disposal.

The Scriptures confirm the intercessory power of the saints in the Church. The Lord said to Moses:

*"Let me alone, then, that My wrath may blaze up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation." But Moses implored the Lord, his God, "Let your blazing wrath die down; relent in punishing Your people. Remember Your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self." So the Lord relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people (Ex.32:10-14).*

St. James told the Christian Community: *"Pray for one another that you may find healing. The fervent petition of a holy man is powerful indeed"*(Jas.5:16). Certainly this would apply to both the just on earth and the just in heaven. Our Lord confirmed that His saints who had been faithful over little things upon this earth would be over very much in the kingdom of God. Those who loved us upon earth love us perfectly in heaven. Those who would have helped us on earth certainly will not help us less now they are in heaven. Before her death, St. Therese of Lisieux promised: *"I will spend my heaven doing good on earth."*

When Faustus the Manichean objected to the honor paid to martyrs, St. Augustine replied: *"Faustus blames us for honoring the memory of the martyrs, as if this were idolatry. The accusation is not worthy of a reply. Christians celebrate the memory of the martyrs with religious ceremony in order to arouse emulation and in order that they may be associated with their merits and helped by their prayers."*

## LESSON TWENTY-SIX

### THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

1. On the road to Damascus, what did Paul discover about the relationship between Jesus and His disciples?
2. What is meant by the word “saint”?
3. What do you understand by the term “Mystical Body of Christ”?
4. How does the life of Jesus Christ continue on this earth?
5. Can Christians merit, by their prayers and good works, blessings and graces for others?
6. According to St. Basil, what does the Presence of the Holy Spirit effect in the lives of believers?
7. What do we learn from 1 Cor.12:26?
8. What does Exodus 32:10-14 and James 5:16 teach us about the intercessory power of the saints?
9. According to St. Augustine, why do we honor martyrs and saints in the Church?
10. What do you understand by the Communion of Saints?
11. What is meant by praying to the Saints?

If you have questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 27

### MARY IN THE SCRIPTURES

A profound devotion to the Mother of Jesus has existed in the Catholic Church, apparently from its origin. It is found in Scripture, Church Tradition, and devotional writings, verifying the prophecy *“Henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”*

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church came to understand that the effects of Mary’s faith were retroactive to the moment of her conception by a special divine privilege referred to in the Church as the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Mary’s soul from the first moment of its existence in the womb of Anne, her mother, was in the state of God’s grace, for *“nothing is impossible to God.”* The Dayspring of Justice must flow from a pure stream!

The Church recognizes in the Book of Genesis an ancient prophecy concerning Mary and her Son: *“I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman and between your offspring and hers--he will crush your head and you will lie in wait for his heel”*(Gen.3:15). The Church finds in this ancient prophecy support for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The word used in the Hebrew, that is translated “enmity,” meant a complete separation that existed between the two parties. The use of the definite article “the” indicated that this enmity is to exist between Satan and a particular woman. It implies the woman will never be under the dominion of Satan. The prophecy does not refer to Eve. By her sin she entered into the dominion of Satan. It is a prophecy referring to a future woman--the Mother of the Messiah--through whom would come the defeat of Satan. In the last book of the Scriptures--Revelation--the woman of Genesis is recalled. It describes a great war between Satan, and the woman and her seed. It relates the inability of the great dragon to touch the woman.

Mary, the New Eve, is conceived in grace. She freely rejects the temptations of Satan, and adheres to the word of God. *“Behold the handmaid--the bond servant--the slave of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy Word.”* Mary freely confirmed herself as Daughter of the Heavenly Father, and became the



fitting Mother of one whose life ambition would be to fulfill the will of the Father.

We need to bear in mind that every privilege and honor granted to Mary has always been in light of her relationship to Jesus. Why has the Church insisted on the title “*Mother of God*” for Mary? Because men of the past and present have taught that Jesus was not divine at birth, but only a mere man later adopted by God. Mary gave birth to a Person. She is mother of a Person. Who was this Person? Merely a human being, or God-man? In the Gospel of Luke, the inspired Elizabeth calls Mary “*the mother of my Lord.*” The word for Lord was *Kyrios*--the divine name given to Jesus by the early Church. To say Mary is not the Mother of God implies her Son was not divine. The title, properly understood, does not imply that Mary is the origin of the divinity of Jesus, but rather, that one cannot separate the divinity from the person she bore. Never for a moment was Jesus not God-Man. Never for a moment was Mary mother of a child that was not divine! If a woman has a son that becomes President of the United States, that woman is certainly the Mother of the President of the United States even though she did not beget his presidency.

The appearance of Mary in Mark is somewhat negative. Mark relates,

*His mother and His brothers arrived, and as they stood outside they sent word to Him to come out. The crowd seated around Him told Him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for You.” Jesus said in reply, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” And gazing around Him at those seated in the circle He continued: “These are My mother and My brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to Me”(Mk.3:1-35).*

It is not the intention of Mark to call attention to Mary. The family of Jesus is being used by the enemies of Jesus to discredit Him. They call attention to His mother and His relatives to indicate His poor and lowly origin--a native of Nazareth in Galilee. The words of Jesus are a rebuttal to the belief that attributed worth and value to biological origin. Real human worth comes from the internal qualities of the soul and spirit. Those who are rich in faith and obedience are truly valued in the sight of God. Kinship in the flesh to the Messiah of Israel does not even give the Mother of the Messiah her claim to salvation. But what does do so, Luke clearly indicated: “*Those who hear the Word of God and act upon it.*” Luke indicates that Mary and the brethren of

Jesus did fulfill this requirement when He places them all in the Cenacle, waiting and praying for the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel account of Matthew emphasizes the virgin birth of the Christ child. The Old Testament tells of many marvelous births in preparation for the Messiah. These unexpected births were signs that salvation comes from God. The virginal conception of Jesus is the climax and goal of this great series, totally surpassing human hopes and means.

The perpetual virginity of Mary is a teaching of the Catholic Faith. The source of this truth is Christian Tradition. That Mary was “ever-virgin” was accepted by all Christians until the Reformation. The truth is widely attested to in the writings of the early Church. Certain biblical statements seemingly militate against this truth.

St. Jerome dealt with these difficulties in the Fifth Century. The Scriptures speak of *the “brethren of the Lord”* and *“the brothers and sisters of Jesus.”* The word “brethren” had a very wide use in the Old Testament. In the Hebrew the word *ah* covers masculine relatives of varying degrees: brothers, half-brothers, cousins, and brothers-in-law. The Greek Septuagint uses *adelphos* to render all these shades of meaning. *Adelphos* is used in this text. We read in Genesis 29:15: *“Laban said to Jacob, because you are my brother, should you therefore serve me for naught?”* Jacob is not the blood brother of Laban, but his nephew. Abram calls Lot his brother but he is not. Anyone who was kinsman to another in the Old Testament was called a brother. It is generally believed that the brethren of Jesus were his cousins through Mary of Cleophas, who was related to the Virgin Mary.

We read in Matthew: *“When Joseph awoke, he did as the Angel of the Lord had directed him and received her into his home as his wife. He did not know her until she brought forth her first born son, whom he named Jesus”(Mt.1:24).* It is asked, *“Does this not prove that Mary had other children?”* St. Jerome demonstrated that in the Hebrew the word translated as “until” or “till” denotes only that something has been done without any regard to the future. St. Luke records that Anna lives *“as a widow until she was eighty-four”(Lk.2:37).* It is doubtful she married after that.

“First born” was merely an official title given to the first child born in the family. It did not matter if there were other children or not. It has been

recorded on a tomb, still existing to this day, dating from the time of Christ, that a certain woman died giving birth to “her first born son.”

These scriptures of themselves do not disprove the perpetual virginity of Mary. Without reference to the traditional teaching of the Church, the question would remain unanswered. The Church is the true and authentic interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures, and she affirms that these scriptures do not imply Mary had other children.

St. Luke presents Mary as the Daughter of Zion--the symbol and the representative of Israel. Mary spiritually inherits the graces of Israel. In her soul they found full flowering and fruition. She is the personification of Israel. As the embodiment of Israel, she receives the Messiah. The Old Testament had pictured Yahweh as being present in the womb of His people, in the midst of his people. The angel calls Mary *Kecharitomene*. This is God’s name for Mary. The word expresses loveliness and beauty-- all the qualities expressed by the word “grace.” The expression tells us that Mary has received the favor of God. Gabriel declares Mary’s position before God: “*O highly favored daughter!*” Luke uses the same concept to express the divine favor resting on the Christ-child: “*The grace of God was upon Him.*”

Luke confirms the virginity and the divine maternity of Mary when he writes: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*” The verb used to express the “overshadowing” conveys a very powerful concept. It means “to cover over with one’s shadow.” When used in the Old Testament, it signified the Divine Presence. We read in Exodus 40:35: “*Moses could not enter the Meeting Tent (containing the Ark of the Covenant) because the cloud settled down upon it and the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling.*” At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple we read: “*A cloud filled the house of the Lord . . . the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling.*”

Mary appears in Luke both as the House of God--the New Temple--and the Ark of the Covenant. The sacred ark that had disappeared six centuries before has now returned in a more perfect way. Mary is the living Ark of the Covenant carrying Jesus. The “ark of the covenant” theme continues in Luke’s account of Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth. The Old Testament backdrop for the Visitation Scene is Second Samuel, chapter six.

In the Gospels, Mary is called by name once in Mark, five times in Matthew, twelve times in Luke. John never refers to her as Mary. He intentionally and

systematically avoids doing so. He certainly knew her name. Yet, he calls her always “Mother of Jesus” or “His mother.” This, in John’s mind, was the title that expressed the unique destiny of Mary, a destiny never to be repeated. “Mother of Jesus” expressed, for John, the very existence of Mary.

Both evangelists, John and Luke, present Mary as a unique person but also as a Christian symbol. Mary, as the first to believe, accept, and follow Jesus, became a symbol of the redeemed people. By her untiring life of devotion and unconditional love of Jesus Christ, Mary became the Perfect Christian--a fitting example for the Church and its idealized symbol. Because Mary personally embodies the grace and vocation of the Church in its relationship to the Triune God, she symbolizes the Church. The Church must achieve, in a corporate way, what Mary as a person accomplished through her loving service to the humanity of Jesus Christ. In the achieved glory of Mary--her Assumption into Heaven—the Church beholds its own glorious future.

John interprets Mary’s presence at the Wedding of Cana symbolically. Mary represents the Church. The concern of Mary for the lack of wine is interpreted as a concern and request for the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist. The first prayer of the Church for the Holy Spirit is offered by Mary. Christ’s reply to His mother is interpreted not as a refusal but as a delay. The Holy Spirit--the New Wine--can only be given at the death of Jesus. The actual changing of the water and wine is a sign that the prayer will be granted.

Mary appears twice in the Gospel of John. The second time, Mary appears at Calvary. At Calvary John deliberately recalls the Cana scene by a repetition of vocabulary: “His mother,” “woman,” “hour.” When the hour does come, we see that Jesus calls Mary and the Beloved Disciple to the foot of the Cross. John may well be, as tradition tells us, the actual person involved here, but the “beloved disciple” is another corporate symbol. John, as the Beloved Disciple, represents all men and women who became beloved disciples by perfecting themselves in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

John indicates that something profound is taking place between the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of Jesus, by using a scriptural formula for revelation: “*Here is your son*” and “*here is your mother.*” What has occurred between Mary and the Beloved Disciple apparently completes the work the Father has given Jesus to do. Immediately following this scene, Jesus dies. The words addressed to Mary and the Beloved Disciple indicate an adoption process. In this process, the Beloved Disciple becomes the adoptive son of Mary and,

thereby, the adoptive brother of Jesus. When our Lord speaks from the Cross: *“Woman, here is your son!”* and to the Beloved Disciple *“Here is your mother!”* the words are creative. They are spoken by the creative Word of God: His Word brought the world into being; now it brings a new creation into existence.

Mary now becomes the New Eve—*“mother of all the living”*--as she accepts the Beloved Disciple. Upon Calvary, Mary, Mother of Jesus according to the flesh, becomes Mother of the whole Christ according to the Spirit. As mother of the Messiah, Mary’s role is in the struggle against the satanic serpent. At the foot of the Cross she is entrusted with offspring whom she must protect in the continuing struggle between Satan and the followers of the Messiah.

When John writes that Jesus *“bowed His head, He handed over the Spirit,”* he pictures Jesus breathing His last breath over the heads of His Mother and the Beloved Disciple. At this hour of Jesus’ glorification, as Jesus returns to the Father, the mission of the Holy Spirit--proceeding from the Son and the Father--has commenced. A new creation has occurred flowing from the work of the New Adam assisted by the New Eve.

No matter what man gives to Mary, it is nothing in comparison to what God has done for her. If we are criticized for honoring her, it should be remembered that God started it. God the Father chose her as the daughter most worthy to be the Mother of His Beloved Son. God the Son chose her as His Mother in the Incarnation. God the Holy Spirit chose her as His holy spouse... What can man add but—*“Blessed are you among women!”*

**LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN**  
**MARY IN THE SCRIPTURES**

- 1. What is meant by the Immaculate Conception of Mary?**
- 2. What does enmity between the serpent and “the Woman” imply?**
- 3. Why does the Church insist on the title “Mother of God” for Mary?**
- 4. What does this title imply?**
- 5. What is to be understood from Mark 3:31-35?**
- 6. What is meant by the perpetual virginity of Mary?**
- 7. How are “the brothers and sisters of Jesus” explained in the light of the virginity of Mary?**
- 8. What does God’s name for Mary, *Kecharitomene*, signify?**
- 9. How is Mary the symbol of all Christians?**
- 10. What is signified in Jesus’ words to Mary and John on Calvary?**
- 11. Why is Mary called the New Eve?**
- 12. What spiritual assistance does Mary give to those on earth?**

**If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.**

## CHAPTER 28

### THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Christ is the heart and essence of the Gospel--the Good News. But there would be no “good news” without the Holy Spirit--the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Without the Holy Spirit there would have been no Jesus Christ, no redemption, no evangelizing Church--there would have been no “tidings of great joy” to be shared by the whole people.

When the Angel Gabriel announced that Mary would become the mother of the Savior, she inquired: “*How can this be?*” Gabriel reveals the Holy Spirit as the architect of the Incarnation: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God*”(Lk.1:35). What occurred involved the divine and the human: the divine person, the Son; the human person of Mary. They freely became instruments of the Holy Spirit, who brought about union of the Son of God with the human nature formed in the body of Mary. The Holy Spirit effects the union between the divine and human natures. Jesus Christ was the result of this union. The Son of God existed from all eternity, but Jesus Christ came to be in time. Jesus Christ came into being through the docile obedience of the Son of God and the Virgin Mary to the operations of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ became the sun of God’s glory shining in this darkened world.

Jesus Christ is Man of the Holy Spirit. His entire life and mission will be directed by the Holy Spirit. “*I have found a man after my own heart who does all that I ask Him!*” Immediately the Scriptures emphasize that any human being related in any way to the life and mission of Jesus Christ comes under the power of the Holy Spirit. We read: “*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit*”(Lk.1:41). Of John the Baptist we hear: “*He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb*”(Lk.1:15). And again, “*Zechariah, his father, filled with the Holy Spirit, uttered this prophecy...*”(Lk.1:67). Of Simeon who recognized Jesus as the Messiah, we are told that “*the Holy Spirit was upon him... he came to the temple, now, inspired by the Spirit.*”(Lk.2:25,27).

All four Gospel accounts note the relationship of the public ministry of Jesus to the Holy Spirit. The public ministry of Jesus begins with the Holy Spirit being poured out upon Him in a unique and particular fashion, at His baptism by John in the River Jordan. John the Baptist gave this testimony: *“I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from the sky and it came to rest on Him”*(Jn.1:32). When the Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit resting upon Jesus, it carries the connotation of abiding with Him on a permanent basis. As a human being Jesus possessed a human soul. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in His soul. This is quite significant because it implies an abrogation of God’s decree in Genesis: *“My Spirit shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh”*(Gen.6:3).

The Scriptures indicate that the public life of Jesus will be under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit when we are told that immediately after His baptism, *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, then returned from the Jordan and was conducted by the Spirit into the desert for forty days”*(Lk.4:1-2). In Acts, Peter preaches that Jesus *“first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father”*(Acts 2:33). To Cornelius and his household, Peter said, *“I take it you know what has been reported all over Judea about Jesus of Nazareth, beginning in Galilee with the baptism John preached; of the way God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with Him”*(Acts10:37-38). The Acts speak of Jesus instructing *“the apostles He had chosen through the Holy Spirit”*(Acts 1:2). Luke writes that *“Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit”*(Lk.10:21). The Holy Spirit was the source of His earthly joy.

The humanity of Jesus Christ became not only the receptor and reservoir of the Holy Spirit but also would one day become the dispenser of the same Holy Spirit to mankind. We read in John:

*On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me; let him drink who believes in Me. Scripture has it: ‘From within Him rivers of living water shall flow.’”. Here He was referring to the Spirit, who would be received by those who came to believe in Him. There was, of course, no spirit as yet, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39).*



John the Baptist testified: “*The One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is He who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit’*”(Jn.1:33).

Jesus was quite conscious of the fact that as a result of His life the greatest possible gift would come to those who believed in Him. He told the disciples:

*I will not leave you orphaned. I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete to be with you always: the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot accept, since it neither sees Him nor recognizes Him; but you can recognize Him because He remains with you and will be within you.*

Jesus goes on to identify the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit:

*The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you. When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father and whom I Myself will send from the Father--He will bear witness on My behalf (Jn.14:26;15:26).*

Here the Person of the Holy Spirit is clearly distinguished from the Person of the Son and the Father. One sends another--the Father and Son will send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

*Paraclete* is a Greek word that implies more than any English word contains. It implies more than any Latin word can contain. When St. Jerome sought to translate *Paraclete* into Latin, he found it impossible to adequately do so. Therefore, he carried the word over into the Latin bible. We can only understand its meaning by studying the operations of the Paraclete.

Jesus implies that the presence of the Holy Spirit is more important to the disciples than His own physical presence on earth: “*I tell you the sober truth: It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the Paraclete will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send Him to you*”(Jn.16:7). Jesus implies that the Holy Spirit will work within the souls of His disciples in much the same way as the Holy Spirit now works within the soul of Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit will bring a good to the souls of men that the physical presence of Jesus could not achieve. We now know this to be the personal sanctification of those who believe in Jesus. Paul wrote to Titus: “*He saved us through the baptism of*

*new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit He lavished on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs, in hope, of eternal life. You can depend on this to be true”(Ti.3:5-7).*

The Holy Spirit is the substantial love of God personified. The Paraclete is Divine Love existing as a Person. He is the sanctifier because He pours out the love of God into our hearts. His Spirit makes Christian discipleship a reality. The Holy Spirit creates within the spirits of men a taste for the things of God. The Holy Spirit is Himself the gift of Peace promised by Jesus to His disciples: *“Peace is My farewell to you, My peace is My gift to you”(Jn.14:27).* Peace is not a thing nor a condition, but a presence--the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Peace because the love flowing from His Presence unites man with the Father. What sin divided, the Holy Spirit unites.

As a consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus became, according to Hebrews, *“sharers in the Holy Spirit”*--men and women who *“tasted the heavenly gift”* and *“have tasted the power of the age to come”(Heb.6:4-5).* This sharing in the Holy Spirit has certain radical effects upon the bodies and souls of the disciples. Referring to men that had once been slaves of sin, Paul writes:

*“You have been washed, consecrated, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1Cor.6:11).*

*“You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within--the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own. You have been purchased, and at a price! So glorify God in your body” (1Cor.6:19-20).*

Paul clearly teaches that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit affects the body as well as the soul: *“If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through His Spirit dwelling in you”(Rom.8:11).*

Jesus confirms that the Holy Spirit will not only work within the souls of His disciples, but it is the mission of the Holy Spirit to work within the world, and He will use the lives of the disciples of Jesus to accomplish this work: *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses . . . even to the ends of the earth”(Acts 1:8).* The disciples were warned not to begin their mission without the empowering of the Holy Spirit:

*“Wait, rather, for the fulfillment of my Father’s promise--remain here in the city until you are clothed with power from on high”(Lk.24:49).* Once having received the Holy Spirit, they immediately went forth--but with the Holy Spirit always in the lead.

It became clear to the early Church that the Gospel must be proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit, or else it would not be effective. It must be proclaimed to men and women opened to the Holy Spirit, or else it will be resisted and rejected. The Scriptures constantly warn each of us that *“if you hear the voice of God today, do not harden your hearts.”* God made men free and He will not save them without their willful cooperation.

By His death on the Cross, Jesus merited for us the Presence of the Holy Spirit within our souls. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized symbolizes and contains the entire grace of salvation. Indeed, all the power of heaven lies within the souls of the baptized. But that power is not impersonal. It is not “the Force”--it is not like the electricity that we need only to plug into. The Power is a Divine Person; a Person with a mind and will; a Person called the Holy Spirit--the Paraclete; a Person, Who is by nature and operation totally spiritual, not easily discerned by persons earthly and unspiritual. The Holy Spirit desires that we meet Him in a personal encounter, that we meet Him in our soul in the same love in which He meets us. We ought to seek through prayer to know the mind and will of our Divine Guest. He has an expressed will in relationship to the entire Church, and to each of us personally. Paul told the Galatians: *“God lavishes the Spirit on you and works wonders in your midst”(Gal.3:5).* We need to recognize the holy inspiration we experience within our hearts as emanations from His Holy Mind and see them as expressions of His Holy Will. We need to recognize the power and the desires within our own wills to accomplish good as loving power flowing from the Will of the Holy Spirit. We need to recognize the gifts we express and the works we accomplish as resulting from a communal operation of two friends--flowing from love--with the purpose of building up the Body of Christ in Love. Paul admonishes the Galatians: *“Since we live by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s lead”(Gal.5:25).* We are told *“to walk in the Spirit.”* For ones who call themselves “Christian,” this means that what we do and what we say must include the Holy Spirit *“as the wine must taste of its own grape.”*

## LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT

### THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. To whom does St. Luke (1:35) attribute the work of the Incarnation of Jesus?
2. What do you understand by saying Jesus is the “Man of the Holy Spirit”?
3. What do the Scriptures teach us about the Holy Spirit and the public life of Jesus Christ?
4. What great promise did Jesus make to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit?
5. What is meant by the word “Paraclete”?
6. Where will the Holy Spirit reside and work?
7. How would you describe the personality of the Holy Spirit?
8. What does the Holy Spirit accomplish in the souls of believers?
9. What does it mean to be the “Temple of the Holy Spirit”?
10. What is the mission of the Holy Spirit in the world?
11. What is the importance of the Holy Spirit in your life?
12. How does a Christian open his or her life to the power and influence of the Holy Spirit?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.

## CHAPTER 29

### THE TRIUNE GOD

In divine revelation God communicates His secrets to us. Since human beings possess the power to communicate their innermost thoughts to one another, certainly their Creator possesses the same power. If God is love, God communicates with those He loves. Revelation has been described as “lovers telling secrets to each other.”

Mystery is the nature of divine revelation. Mystery is a divine secret. The content of the secret is the Self revelation of God. With the secret must come inner illumination for the human mind “to see,” that is, to know the truth. It is not so much that a person understands a revelation, but that a person is open to receive it. Revelation is a two-way street: God willing to reveal His innermost Self, and a human person willing to receive the revelation. It is not so much that man grasps the truth, but that he is grasped by it. Revelation leads a person into a new dimension--a heavenly relationship. To accept a divine revelation implies being changed. It means no longer living solely within the confines of one’s own sensitive world. Revelation makes human beings aware of God, and their personal relationship with God.

In the past God spoke to mankind through His intermediary, Moses. God revealed from the burning bush: *“I AM WHO AM . . . This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations”*(Ex.3:14-15). The word *Yahweh*--the proper personal name of God in the Old Testament--comes from Hebrew words. Perhaps the best English translation of the Hebrew would be “The Only Existing One.” On Mt. Sinai--amidst a great display of power--God communicated: *“I am Yahweh your God . . . You shall have no gods except m.”*(Ex.20:2).

The Israelites personally experienced Yahweh within their lives. Their experience led them to conceive of God’s relationship with them to be as personal and intimate as that of a father with a beloved son. The prophet Isaiah prayed: *“Look down from heaven, look down from Your holy and glorious dwelling . . . Do not let Your compassion go unmoved, for You are our Father. For Abraham does not own us and Israel does not acknowledge us; You,*

*Yahweh, Yourself are our Father, our Redeemer is Your ancient name*”(Is.63:15-16). Despite this intimacy, Yahweh did not lose His “otherness” from the Israelites. He still remained the One no man could behold and live (Ex.33:20). At the dedication of the Jewish temple, the glory of the Lord filled the place but Solomon proclaimed: “*Yahweh has chosen to dwell in the thick cloud*” (1Kings 8:12). The Scriptures imply that, although Yahweh set the sun in the heavens, there is darkness around Him. The darkness is from the point of view of human vision. As it is when the human eye gazes directly at the sun and all becomes darkness, so it is when the human mind contemplates the nature of God--human understanding remains in darkness.

Israel experienced the God that surpassed human understanding, and it experienced Him as “Father.” Israel expressed her faith in this formula: “*Hear, O Israel! Yahweh our God is the one Yahweh. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength*”(Dt.6:4-5).

When the Christian Community reflected upon its own personal religious experience with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, it found Israel’s expression of Faith inadequate in the light of the Christian experience. Paul wrote in reference to Christ: “... *that mystery hidden from ages and generations past but now revealed to His holy ones. God has willed to make known to them the glory beyond price*”(Col.1:26-27). Jesus acknowledged Yahweh as Father and Himself as God’s only Son sent from heaven to save the world (John 3:16-17, 31). When Jesus speaks of the Son being by the Father, He teaches that a real distinction exists between the Father and Son. One does not send oneself but another. “*I did not come of my own will; it was He who sent me*” (Jn.8:42). As Son of God, Jesus viewed His nature to be equal with that of the Father:

*“The Father and I are one” (Jn.10:30).*

*“If you really knew Me, you would know My Father also” (Jn.14:7).*

*“Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father... Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (Jn.14:9,11).*

*“All that the Father has belongs to Me” (Jn.16:15).*

When the Church later sought to formulate the relationship existing between the Father and Son, it would speak of the Father “begetting” the Son. The Father does not create or make the Son but begets Him. One makes or creates something different from oneself--what one begets is of one’s own substance. The Son shared the divine nature with the Father.

Jesus confirmed that a revelation was granted to the Christian Community denied in ages past: *“No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt.11:27)*. Jesus implies this revelation had not previously been revealed in the Old Testament: *“I assure you, many a prophet and many a saint longed to see what you see, but did not see it, to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Mt.13:17)*.

Jesus Himself revealed that the Paraclete is distinct from the Father and Son, but also shares in the divine nature:

*“I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete--to be with you always: the Spirit of truth ...the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, will instruct you in everything” (Jn.14:16-17a, 26)*.

*“When the Paraclete comes from the Father--and whom I myself will send from the Father--He will bear witness on My behalf” (Jn.15:26)*.

*“When He comes however, being the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth” (Jn.16:13)*.

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as “another Paraclete.” Once the divinity of Jesus was confirmed, the divinity of the Holy Spirit would follow. The operations of the Holy Spirit within the New Testament confirm the divine nature of the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as one who *“scrutinizes all matters, even the deep things of God” (1Cor.2:10b)*. Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as *“The mind of Christ” (1Cor.2:16)*. It is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that *“what we utter is God’s wisdom: a mysterious, a hidden wisdom . . . God has revealed this wisdom to us through the Spirit” (1Cor.2:7,10a)*.

The Old Testament revealed that God is One. The New Testament revealed that the One God is Triune. In the written gospels we see reflections of this mystery. At the Annunciation, Gabriel said to Mary: *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you: hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God”* (Lk.1:35). At the baptism of Jesus we read: *“After Jesus was baptized, He came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and He saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over Him. With that, a voice from the heaven said: ‘This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on Him.’”* (Mt.3:16-17). Jesus commissioned the Church to bring forgiveness of sins and sanctification to all the nations *“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt.28:19). The Greek usage in this passage leaves no doubt about the distinction and the equality of the Three Persons named. Perhaps Paul best expressed the Christian formula of faith when he prayed: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!”* (2 Cor.13:13).

It was left to the Fathers of the Church in the following centuries to hammer out the theological doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They had to preserve the revelation of the Old Testament that God is One, along with the New Testament revelation that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are divine and distinct. They did this against the stimuli of three major errors. First, Sabellianism, the result of Jewish influence, that made the three divine persons merely three modes of expression: the One Person of God expressing Self as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Second, the Platonic influence that multiplied not only the divine persons, but the divine nature itself, thereby attacking the oneness of God. Third, the error of the Subordinationist and the Arians, who held that the Son and Holy Spirit were inferior to the Father, since they were created beings outside the divine nature. The Council of Nicea, in 325 A.D., defended and defined the divinity of the Son. The Council of Constantinople, in 381 A.D., did the same for the Holy Spirit.

The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity was formulated within the philosophical thought of the time. The concepts of nature and person were finely defined and distinguished. The Christian doctrine found final form in the Athanasian Creed promulgated in the first part of the fifth century: *“This is the Catholic Faith: to venerate One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: not confusing the Persons, not dividing the Essence. The Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all distinct. But the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have all one and the same Godhead, equal glory, and co-eternal majesty... The Father*



*is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. And yet these are not three Gods but one God.”*

In this crystallized form, the doctrine of the Trinity remained through the centuries. Unfortunately, it assumed the status of a theological museum piece. Few minds dared touch it, and even fewer spirits were inspired by it. How rarely have inspiring sermons been preached on the Holy Trinity. In actual practice, Christian devotion is often very un-Trinitarian. Karl Rahner wrote: *“Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists.’” The Holy Spirit has rightly been called the “forgotten Person of the Blessed Trinity.”*

With today’s focus on the Sacred Scriptures, many theologians are beginning to re-think the doctrine of the Trinity in the light of scriptural revelation. As the Scriptures define God as love, some theologians are seeking to re-define the nature of God in the light of love. Refreshingly, the nature of God is being viewed as communitarian rather than in terms of a static, immutable infinity.

The Three Persons are seen to constitute a society. Their nature is to be a community of three, and as such they collaborate with one another in working out our salvation. God is a Community of Three Divine Persons. Commenting on this concept, Joseph A. Backen wrote:

*It eliminates or at least reduces a problem in human relations that has been caused by the concept of God as absolute and self-sufficient. For, as long as God has thus been conceived as a being totally independent of His creatures, human beings have tended, subconsciously perhaps, to imitate God in seeking their own self-fulfillment in terms of self-sufficiency and independence of others. If, however, God is understood to be a society of three persons who are sympathetically involved with men and women in history, then human beings will perhaps recognize more readily that they too have a basically social orientation, that the perfection of their nature lies in interdependence with others for the achievement of common goals, not in some unattainable ideal of independence and self-sufficiency.*

Many of us may never grasp the theological explanations of the Trinity, but the love of the Most Holy Trinity has touched each of us. This personal religious experience ought to direct and measure our own devotional response

to the Triune God. What our minds may not be able to fully embrace, our hearts certainly may. Three Divine Persons have loved us. God, the Father, so loved us that He sent into the world His only begotten Son to save us. The Son taught that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friend. He called us "friends" and died that we might live. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell permanently with us as our Teacher, Counselor, Fortifier, and Sanctifier. We ought not only to love God the Father who created us, God the Son who redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, but also to love what They love--mankind.

Hear, O Christians! Our God is Triune. Therefore, you shall love the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength!

## LESSON TWENTY-NINE

### THE TRIUNE GOD

1. What is meant by divine mystery?
2. How did God identify Himself in the Old Testament?
3. What do the Scriptures teach about God in Deuteronomy 6:4-5?
4. Give a Scripture quote in which Jesus Christ claims to be one with the Father.
5. How do we know that Jesus is distinct from the Father?
6. How do we know the Holy Spirit to be distinct from the Father and the Son?
7. How do we know the Holy Spirit is divine?
8. What is the error of Sabellianism?
9. What is the error of the Subordinationist?
10. How would you express the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?
11. What do we, as Christians, learn about our life on earth from the communitarian life of the Blessed Trinity in Heaven?
12. How have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit personally expressed their love for us?

If you have any questions on this lesson or any other questions on the Catholic Religion, please list them here.

## APPENDAGE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF A CATHOLIC BIBLE STUDY

Eusebius Jerome was one of the greatest students of the Bible in the whole world. Although he was born in Italy, he moved to Bethlehem where, for thirty-four years, he studied the Bible. Until his death in 420 A.D., he earnestly studied Greek and Hebrew, and toured all Palestine in the company of learned Rabbis in order to gain a better understanding of Scripture through acquaintance with its background, geography, and customs. He devoted untold hours to translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin. For many centuries his Latin translation of the Scriptures, called the Vulgate, was the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. Jerome said, *“I do what I ought, in obedience to Christ, who says: ‘Search the Scriptures’ and ‘Seek and you shall find.’ I have no desire to hear the words addressed to me: ‘You err, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.’ If, as Saint Paul says, Christ is God’s Power and Wisdom, and if one who does not know the Scriptures does not know God’s Power and Wisdom, then ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”*

It has often been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It is certainly true that a little knowledge of the Scriptures is a dangerous thing. Every heresy through the centuries that tore the Christian Church apart was based on an erroneous interpretation of the Scriptures--particularly the writing of St. Paul. Speaking of St. Paul’s writing, St. Peter himself wrote: *“There are certain passages in them hard to understand. The ignorant and the unstable distort them just as they do the rest of Scripture to their own ruin” (2Pt.3:16).*

Eusebius Jerome became quite irascible with people who went around superficially interpreting the Scriptures. He once observed: *“Farming, building, carpentry, etc., all require an apprenticeship, but when it comes to interpreting God’s word, any gabby old man or woman, any doddering old fool or dilettante can blithely dissect it and have a go at explaining it--masters in their ignorance!”*

The Catholic Church is very concerned that its members study the Scriptures, that they make a serious and not superficial study of the Scriptures. Since “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ,” is there anything more important for a sincere Christian than a serious study of the Scriptures? Anything less, and we too will end up being gabby old men and women blithely dissecting the Word of God--masters in our own ignorance.

The Second Vatican Council laid down certain guidelines for a Catholic Bible study:

*The interpreter of Sacred Scriptures, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words . . . but, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly brought to light. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith.*

As Catholics we believe the Holy Spirit spoke to the Church through the second Vatican Council. We cannot therefore prudently ignore these regulations and others given by the Council for the study of the Scriptures.

It is very important that Catholics attend a Catholic Bible study. As far as a Catholic is concerned, there is no such thing as a non-denominational Bible study. You either have a Catholic Bible study or a Protestant Bible study. Each of necessity fosters its own spirit. The difference between the spirits is often too subtle for the untrained eye to detect. The spirit shapes the spiritual personality of a person and unconsciously colors and directs the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Religious principles and their applications are the foundations of religious personality. A person is often unconscious of these foundations even though they influence his or her whole life style. There are fundamental differences between the traditions of Catholic and Protestant beliefs on matters of salvation, grace, sources of divine revelation, Scripture interpretation, the seven sacraments, Church authority, and the Communion of the Saints. In a proper formation of a religious spirit, a neglect of one truth and/or the over

emphasis of a truth destroys the proper religious balance of the person, resulting in a spiritual deformation.

If a Bible study flows out of a Catholic background, it will almost unconsciously demonstrate a Catholic Spirit, and produce such a Spirit without necessarily emphasizing fundamental Catholic beliefs. The same follows for a Bible study originating from a non-Catholic source. We repeat: as far as a Catholic is concerned, there is no such thing as a non-denominational Bible study. If one appears to be so, it is only because the Catholic fails to have the wisdom to distinguish between a Catholic Spirit and a non-Catholic spirit. You can discern the spirit by the ultimate fruit it produces.

You may ask, "Well, what is the difference whether it's a Catholic or Protestant Bible study, as long as you are studying the Bible?" If Christian Revelation is important--if Christian Truth is important, then it does make a difference. The Catholic Church has a vision of Truth that is distinct from that of non-Catholic Churches. Catholics must be true to that vision if they do not want to offend the Holy Spirit--the Spirit of Truth, and even be led into a sin against the Holy Spirit. To say a truth is not important is offensive to the Holy Spirit. To deny a revealed Truth knowing it to be true could be a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Recently a person unknown to me called at 1:00 a.m., too disturbed to sleep. The person went to confession that evening for the first time in four years. The confessor said something about salvation that disturbed the person. As we talked, other emotionally disturbing issues surfaced to conscious awareness. All the emotional disturbances that kept the person awake were rooted in theological beliefs. At the end of the conversation the caller mentioned having attended for the last four years a Bible study called Bible Fellowship, a "non-denominational" Bible study. There was the root of the problem. There is the problem! Unconsciously, a Protestant spirituality had been formed in this individual that would no longer leave the person at peace within a Catholic Spirit of things. The spirit at this point is divided--part Protestant and part Catholic. You have a case of religious schizophrenia that ultimately must produce bad fruit. It can end in deterioration of the personality with detrimental physical consequences. It may leave the person with no spiritual peace within his or her own religion. Or, it may lead, as it often does, to abandoning the Catholic Faith. Many only abandon the faith in their hearts

and remain as disruptive spirits within a Catholic community--expressing dissatisfaction with everything Catholic.

Long years of experience verify what has been written. This is not a criticism of non-Catholic Bible studies in themselves but a salutary warning that they are not for Catholics who desire to remain Catholic in spirit.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fr. James P. O'Bryan, S.T., the author of this book and a Catholic Bible study, *INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP*, has worked to make it possible for Catholics to have a good Catholic Bible Study. Anyone interested in beginning a Catholic Bible Study in their parish, neighborhood, or family--for assistance and information of his Bible Study series, and his other books--write to:

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Irvine, CA 92603

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE TRUTH IS LIGHT

As members of the Catholic Church, we possess a rich Christian inheritance of almost two thousand years. Our beliefs are the flowerings and the fruits of the Holy Spirit working within the Christian Church since Pentecost. These beliefs find their roots and foundations in God's revelation to the Twelve Apostles through Jesus Christ. Only through the operations of the Holy Spirit within the Church can this divine revelation be penetrated and comprehended. Jesus informed His Apostles that many religious truths would be revealed to them only through the Holy Spirit: *"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. When He comes, however, being the Spirit of Truth, He will guide you to all truth"* (Jn.16:12-13a). These revelations the Church received from the Apostles. Some of these are in our written traditions called the New Testament Scriptures; others survived through oral traditions being expressed in the constant and continuous beliefs of the Christian Community. The concluding verses of the Gospel of John--the last written gospel account--substantiates the fact that the entire revelation given by Jesus has not been written in the Scriptures: *"There are still many other things that Jesus did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them"* (Jn.21:25). However, within the Mind of the Holy Spirit resides the fullness of divine revelation. This same Holy Spirit recalls these truths to Christian consciousness, and under the light of the same Holy Spirit, the Christian Community through the ages grows in a deeper understanding of God's revelation to the Church. This Church is the living Body of Christ on earth, progressively reaching its perfect maturity.

Within the spirits of holy men and women, the Holy Spirit has been operative through the centuries, bringing deeper insights into the mystery of God's revelation as these humble and docile spirits contemplate God's revelation to the Church. One need but open the pages of Church history to see how the Church as a body, represented in its great Church Councils, has defended Christian revelation against error, falsity, exaggeration, and misinterpretation. Through the theological storms of the centuries, the Holy



Spirit has continuously guided the Church on a straight path to the knowledge and possession of God. The result of all this is the spiritual inheritance we Catholics possess today. Such a gift does not come without its corresponding obligations. We are obliged, not only to seek a deeper understanding of our faith, but also to preserve this faith and to defend this faith when attacked, and to explain this faith when questioned. As St. Paul wrote: *“Keep that which is committed to your trust, (1Tm.6:20.) “Continue in those things which you have learned and which has been committed to you. Knowing of whom you have learned them” (2Tm.3:14).* As Catholics we possess a unique vision of divine truth to which we must remain faithful and accurately proclaim in the world. This is our witness of Jesus Christ in the world. We too must have the love and courage to proclaim, “Here I stand!”

Our task is neither light nor easy. It is no easier to explain the Catholic Faith than it would be to explain the creation of a great cathedral like Notre Dame. To understand and explain such magnificence, much study and research would be needed. So, too, it is with our Catholic Faith. It is a veritable Cathedral Truth upon which one truth builds upon another and blends within it. One truth gives foundation to the truth that crowns it. Our Christian religion cannot be understood unless each truth is able to be seen in its proper relationship to the whole body of revelation. When men fail to grasp the whole picture and make a religion out of isolated truths, much harm comes to Christian revelation and faith. The beautiful harmony of revelation is damaged as much by an overemphasis of truth as by heresy.

To substitute the Catholic Religion for a faith based purely on one’s own interpretation of the Bible is equivalent to burning the libraries of the world and beginning anew the search for knowledge and truth. The Catholic Church is no biblical kindergarten that keeps its members spiritual infants. In the words of the Book of Hebrews, it says to us, *“Let us go on to things more perfect” (Heb.6:1).*

I was born and reared in Mississippi when Catholics were less than one percent of the population. The only Catholics we knew were ourselves. Our friends and neighbors were Protestants. Many of these I admired for their commitment to Christ and the holiness of their lives. However, neither my personal respect nor admiration for them led me to be Protestant. Neither did the desire for social or material success tempt me to leave the Catholic faith. From childhood, there grew in me a consuming desire to know and possess

truth. Within the Catholic Religion, I found a degree of divine truth I could find in no other religion. This was to be true for me as a child and as a man.

To grow up in the South was to live in an environment of anti-Catholicism. Among the general population, anti-Catholicism was largely due to ignorance, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation of the Catholic Faith on the part of many sincere Christian people. Many Protestants, upon coming to a proper understanding of the Catholic Faith, admitted the beauty and reasonableness of its teachings even though they honestly and sincerely disagreed with them. Through proper understanding they came to respect Catholics and their faith.

Growing up as a Catholic among Protestants, naturally I engaged constantly in discussion and argument of religion. However, I never lost a friend over religious disagreement, for even when we disagreed, we still respected the faith of one another. Religious arguments were won by the one who could come up with the last Bible quote. That was the name of the game—out-quoting the Scriptures to one another. Arguing religion, in a proper spirit, is good. It helps clarify and strengthen one's beliefs. It seldom, if ever, converts anyone. Today we call it "dialogue" and it certainly can aid the spirit of Ecumenism. Needless to say, no Catholics should enter into dialogue with Protestants unless they are familiar with the Scriptures.

In my youthful days I spent many hours explaining our faith and answering the questions of Protestant friends. I did not always have the answer, but I knew it existed. I resolved never to be asked the same question twice without having the proper answer. By the time I finished high school, there were few questions I could not answer, and with biblical support.

Another real cause, and a most lamentable one, of anti-Catholicism in the South was due to men and women who, for legions of reasons, deliberately spread lies, half-truths, and misrepresentations of the Catholic Faith in order to stir hatred, contempt and fear of the Catholic Church among people. Some of these were politicians, but most were Protestant ministers--ministers who did not encourage so much a love of their religion as hatred for the religion of others. Unfortunately, it appears easier for people to hate than to love. It is easier to stir hatred in men's hearts than to awaken love in them. These ministers of the Word fed the fires of hatred in the hearts of their congregations, not only against Catholics, but most especially against the Negro. Once, when a priest asked a good black man why he didn't join the

Catholic Church, he responded: “Lawdy, Father! It is bad enough being a black man in the South, without being a Catholic too.”

With the passing of the years, for many reasons, things grew better in the South, both for the Catholics and blacks. It was hoped we had seen an end to such deliberate and malicious anti-Catholicism and racism. However, since coming to California, this ugly phenomenon of anti-Catholicism raises once again its diabolical head. This spirit rises not from a desire to know truth, but to destroy truth. It often expresses an innate and unconscious hatred for divine truth. It wars against the ancient Christian beliefs held by the Catholic Church.

One case in point is the present anti-Catholic campaign being waged by the organization called “Last Day Ministries,” based out of Lindale, Texas. Their anti-Catholic campaign is deliberately directed toward young Catholics who have had a “spiritual awakening,” but are weak and ignorant concerning their own Catholic Faith. According to its report, this organization had considerable success in shipwrecking the Catholic faith of many young Catholic people. It proudly reprints letters from Catholics led out of the Church through its articles which have a wide circulation on college campuses. In one breath it hypocritically professes, “We really, really love Catholics!”, and in the next breath it laments the fact that Protestant ministers no longer preach anti-Catholicism: “It no longer is in vogue to speak of the pope as ‘the anti-Christ’ or the Catholic Church as the ‘whore of Babylon.’” It acknowledges that we are not a cult, but “It’s an empire!” It implies the Church to be the empire of Satan. One of its articles concludes with these remarks concerning the Catholic Church: “Never has something so black and wicked gotten away with appearing so holy and mysteriously beautiful . . . for so long!” The anti-Catholic articles appearing in its publication are being reprinted in pamphlet form and distributed in front of Churches especially popular with young Christians. Its message is being repeated in the sermons of other ministers.

The work of this organization represents but the tip of the iceberg of an anti-Catholic movement in our country. It is partly a reaction to the effects of the Second Vatican Council upon the general population of Protestants. It embodies the anger of Satan over the spirit of Ecumenism growing within the Christian Churches--truly a work of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of Ecumenism is especially singled out for attacks by these enemies of the Church.

It has been said, "All that evil needs to flourish is for good people to ignore it." How well the Jewish people learned that lesson. Anti-Catholicism is a spreading fire that must be fought and checked. However, I am afraid many Catholics and their publications hesitate to speak out against this flood of anti-Catholic literature. They fear to injure the spirit of Ecumenism. They rightly prefer to emphasize that which unites rather than divides. It is a commendable attitude. However, any true union must be based upon truth as well as love. Love is blind without truth. Truth gives love its proper direction. Love without truth becomes like the sympathetic monkey that sought to save a fish from drowning by carrying it into the safety of the tree.

The Holy Spirit is identified in the Scriptures as the Spirit of Truth. The untruth can never be of the Holy Spirit, nor can denying or ignoring religious truth be a cause for Christian unity. It is not the work of the Holy Spirit to reduce Christian truth to its lowest common denominator in order to produce unity among Christians.

The attitude taken by many Catholic leaders in this regard recalls the words of Isaiah to the Shepherds of Israel: "*All you wild beasts of the fields, come and eat, all you beasts in the forest! My watchmen are blind, all of them unaware; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark*" (Is.56:9,10).

Only truth dispels the darkness of error. Truth is the only adequate defense against a lie. But in order for truth to triumph, it must be declared. Jesus commanded the Church: "*Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations... Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you*" (Mt.28:19a-20a). St. Paul tells us what we must do in such times: "*In all things taking the shield of faith,, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one...and take unto you the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*" (Eph.6:16,17 --in other words, the Sword of Truth. We are told in First Peter that we must always be ready with a reply for those who ask a person for that hope which is within us (1Pt.3:15). I appeal especially to the youth on our college campuses to know their Catholic faith, proclaim it, and defend it.

Jesus warns that if we are ashamed of Him before men, He will be ashamed of us before His Father. Do not be afraid to be in a minority for Christ or even a social misfit for Christian truth. We must profess the Christ *we* know, not the Christ someone else may hold. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthians and may they not be applied to us: "*My fear is that, just as the serpent seduced Eve by his cunning, your thoughts may be corrupted and you may fall away from*

*your sincere and complete devotion to Christ. I say this because, when someone comes preaching another Jesus than the one we preached, or when you receive a different spirit than the one you have received, or a gospel other than the gospel you accepted, you seem to endure it quite well” (2Cor.11:3-4). As an old Southern friend often said to me: “The truth is light! Tell it like it is and let the light shine.”*



*The Cross: Tree of Life*  
Detail of the XII Century mosaic  
in San Clemente in Rome