

Gifts of Finest Wheat

Fall 2009 - Ecclesiology

October 22, 2009

Session 4 – The Church is Holy and Catholic

- Prayer –

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Amen.

- Questions/Clarifications from last time? From the reading?
- Our goal this evening:

The Church is Holy

- “The Church is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy.”
- Foundation/source of the Church’s holiness
 - Because of Union with Christ and His will to sanctify the Church (Eph 5:25-26)
 - Vivified with the gift of the Holy Spirit; “She herself has no other life but the life of grace.”
 - The call to holiness belongs to the essence of God’s **covenant** with humanity: “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Ex19:6)
 - The Church on earth is holy through her union with the heavenly Church
 - A true holiness through our baptisms when we begin to share in the divine nature; we must hold on to and complete this gift
 - Real though imperfect; Still to be perfected in her members
- In constant renewal
 - “Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time.

Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness" (CCC 827).

- Holiness *of* the Church → Dependant on the action and mission of the Son and Spirit; aids us in pursuing our subjective holiness of the individual
- Holiness *in* the Church → Based on a human and fallible character
- Holiness *in* the Church ought to always correspond to the holiness *of* the Church, but this is not always so.
- Pope Benedict's *ablation* → allow the *nobilis forma* to shine through more fully; (p. 142)
- "In every age, therefore, faith itself in its full magnitude and breadth is the essential reform that we need" (B-16, 145); "We need, not a more human, but a more divine Church then she will also become truly human" (B-16, 146).
- The Universal Call to Holiness
 - The church's holiness must be manifested in the fruits produced by the faithful
 - Christ preached holiness to each and every one of his disciples of every condition
 - "All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40). → "Devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor."
 - "Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to **his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith**, which arouses hope and works through charity" (LG 41).
 - Married couples and parents:
 - Follow their own proper path to holiness by faithful love
 - They are a sign and a participation in that very love with which Christ loved His Bride...
 - Widows and single people...are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavors in the Church
 - Laborers – Imitate through charity and sharing of burdens Christ who worked as a carpenter. "In this, then, their daily work should climb to the heights of holiness and apostolic activity."
 - Those united to the sufferings of Christ.
 - "Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives-and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will" (LG 41).

- The first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God.
 - The use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist
 - Frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy
 - Application of oneself to prayer
 - Self-abnegation
 - Lively fraternal service
 - The constant exercise of all the virtues.
 - The evangelical counsels - Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples
 - Poverty – Christ, though he was rich, became poor for our sake; detachment from worldly goods
 - Chastity
 - An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state. This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls, whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. This perfect continency, out of desire for the kingdom of heaven, has always been held in particular honor in the Church. The reason for this was and is that perfect continency for the love of God is an incentive to charity, and is certainly a particular source of spiritual fecundity in the world (LG 42).
 - “This holy synod asks not only priests but all the faithful that they might receive this precious gift of priestly celibacy in their hearts and ask of God that he will always bestow this gift upon his Church” (Presbyterorum Ordinis 16).
 - Obedience – in emulation of Christ who was obedient to not only His Heavenly Father, but even to his earthly parents
- The Communion of Saints
 - What is the Communion of Saints?
 - “This expression indicates first of all the common sharing of all the members of the Church in holy things (*sancta*): the faith, the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the charisms, and the other spiritual gifts. At the root of this communion is love which “does not seek its own interests” (1 Corinthians 13:5) but leads the faithful to “hold everything in common” (Acts 4:32), even to put one’s own material goods at the service of the most poor.” (CCCC 194)
 - Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others

- Based on our union with Christ, through whom the riches of the head are shared with the members
 - In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.
- The three states of the Church
 - The Church Militant
 - The Church Suffering
 - The Church Triumphant
- The union of the body of Christ transcends and overcomes death
- The Church's holiness manifested through her saints
 - Example
 - Fellowship (Mass)
 - Intercession
 - "They, the saints, are the true normative majority by which we orient ourselves" (B-16 154).
- Our union with the Church Suffering
 - "Purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven"(CCCC 210).
 - "According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one's work. If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Cor 3:10-15)
 - Our intercession
 - (Indulgences)

The Church is Catholic

- "Catholic"
 - "Catholic" derives from the Greek *Kata* (through) and *holos* (the whole)
 - In its widest sense, it means the existence of the Church in all places, in all ages, and her preaching of Christ's doctrines in their entirety.
 - Foreshadowed in the OT: "All nations of the earth shall find blessing in you" (Gen 12:3); "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be

established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it" (Is 2:2-4); The book of Jonah

- The phrase "Catholic Church" first appears in St. Ignatius of Antioch around 110 AD: "Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church."; became a way of connoting that, contrary to the beliefs of heretics, "the Catholic Church possesses one and the same faith through the *whole* world."
- The Church is catholic because Christ is present in her in his fullness as head united to body.
- The fullness of the means of salvation: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, apostolic succession
- The Church is geographically catholic: sent out on a mission to the whole of the human race
- The Church is Catholic in regards to time since she will always exist
- With regard to peoples within the Church – members of every tribe, nation and tongue
- All conditions and classes of life
- The Church: Universal and Particular
 - The one and only Church is a communion of many communities and the local church is a communion of persons; The one and unique Church finds her identity in the communion of Churches, but is not a result of the communion of churches
 - Cannot be compared to what exists between the whole and the part in purely human societies. Each particular Church is not simply a part of the whole, but rather a particular expression of the whole.
 - The universal church cannot be conceived as the sum of the particular churches or as a federation of particular churches.
 - The particular churches arise within and out of the universal church and derive their nature from it.
 - The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful
 - The "particular Church" → The Diocese under a bishop of valid apostolic succession
 - Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome.
- The Church's universal mission
 - A mandate to the Church (Mt 28)
 - Grounded in the eternal love of the Trinity
 - The origin of the mission of the Church is found in the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit

- The motivation is God's love for all persons: "For the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14)
- "Salvation is found in the truth." Relation of love, salvation and truth. "God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).
- Questions?
- Announcements
 - Reading for next time
 - Lolek tickets available
 - March for life info
- Closing prayer –
Prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

Lord Jesus, have mercy on the souls detained in Purgatory. It was for their salvation that you took on our human nature and suffered a most painful death. Have mercy on their burning desire to see you, have mercy on their tears of repentance. Through the merits of your Passion, remit the sentence they incurred by their sins.

Dear loving Jesus, may your Blood descend on those dear souls! May it shorten their time of atonement and may they soon be called to eternal happiness in your Presence! Amen.