

# Gifts of Finest Wheat

Fall 2009 - Ecclesiology

October 1, 2009

Session 1 – Orientation; Definitions; Scriptural background

- 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 the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

- Introduction

- Review Syllabus

- A look at the big picture
- The purpose of our sessions

- Introduction – from Pope Benedict XVI (Called to Communion pages 9, 13)

- The question “What is the Church?” precedes any discussion of how the Church ought to act.
- Importance of Ecclesiology

- Relation of Ecclesiology to the other fields of theology

- Trinitarian Theology
- Christology
- Pneumatology
- Mariology
- Scriptural study
- Sacramental Theology
- Spiritual Theology

- “Church” – the word and its origins

- *Kahal* or *qahal* (Hebrew)
  - *Kahal Yahweh* – “The religious assembly of God”
  - Used in reference to the assembly of people in the desert (Dt. 4:10)
  - Particularly used as the people gathered at Mt Sinai to receive the law and be established as the covenant people of God (Ex. 19)
- *Ekklesia* or *ecclesia*

- “To call out of” – A convocation or an assembly
  - In classical (secular) Greek, the assembly of citizens for legislative/deliberative purposes. Included only citizens with full rights and therefore implies the dignity of the members of the assembly.
  - Adopted in the Greek OT for the assembly of the Chosen people before God, particularly assembled at Mt. Sinai. Used in place of the Hebrew *Kahal*.
  - In both Greek and Semitic use, the assembly received its essential identity from the will of the one calling it and for this purpose. In Greek culture, it was the will of the men of the assembly that gave it its character.
  - The Church, however, is called into being by God as a transcendent act. Hence, it is not equivalent to a democratic convocation of people. The essential movement of the calling is vertical, not horizontal.
  - At first, the early Christians were not clearly distinct from Judaism: went to the Temple, faithful to the Law. When increasing numbers of Gentiles were admitted to the Church and not held to the Law of Judaism, and local communities sprang up outside Jerusalem (Antioch for example), the church identified itself as distinct from Judaism.
  - Judaism was using the Greek *sunagoge* (English Synagogue) for the Hebrew *‘edah*. *‘Edah* is another OT word for the assembly and came in LXX usage to eventually mean the Sabbath gathering for prayer and study of the *Torah*.
  - The Early Christian Church, therefore, saw adopting this name (*ekklesia*) as signifying their continuity with and rightful succession from the Israel of God. This was also in distinction from the Jewish “Synagogue.”
- *Kyriake* or *Kyriakon* – Greek: “What belongs to the Lord,” or “The Lord’s (house)”
  - German *Kirche*
  - English “Church”
- Scriptural background
  - Old Testament types
    - The Church was prepared and prefigured in the OT
    - The first type of the Church is the primitive **covenant** with Adam and Eve, elevating them to a supernatural state of **communion** with God:
    - “Just as Eve was formed from Adam’s side as he slept, so also was the Church born from the pierced heart of Christ as He slept in death upon the cross” (St. Ambrose).

- The Covenant
  - Forges a religious character for the entire **people of Israel**
  - There is a permanent awareness of belonging based on the election of Israel by God
  - The assembly under the Old Law and also in the NT are not essentially a mere social or political reality, but is initiated by God. It does, however, have social, cultural, and political consequences
  - The other covenants of the OT (Noah, Abraham, at Mt. Sinai) further the bond between God and His people. They become the people of God, holy and sacred to the Lord
  - The God who makes the covenant with Israel wants to be present among His people in a special way as a special sign of divine election
- The bridal image of the Church is prefigured in the Song of Songs and the book of Hosea
- New Testament usage
  - Synoptic gospels – appears only twice
    - Matthew 16:18
      - *“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.”*
      - Established by Christ
      - Clearly identified with the group of followers Christ is gathering around Himself
      - Unique role of Peter
      - Permanence of Church
    - Matthew 18:16-17
      - *“If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector.”*
      - Members are to seek redress for injuries from the community rather than through acts of personal revenge
  - The synoptic use the theme of the Kingdom of God more often
    - The foundations of the idea of *ekklesia* are clear here
    - A group of disciples

- A mission to gain other followers
  - Personal allegiance to Christ
- Acts – *ekklesia* occurs 23 times
  - Mostly means the local church, usually Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 15:22)
    - *“Now Saul was consenting to his execution .On that day, there broke out a severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the apostle” (Acts 8:1).*
  - Also references other local churches like Antioch – *“For a whole year they met with the church and taught a large number of people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26).*
  - Jerusalem was the parent and prototype of other Churches; but *ekklesia* was used of local churches in the same sense as the parent Church
  - In Acts, membership in the Church involves acceptance of the claims of Jesus and belief in the saving power of His death. Membership is not through Jewish birth but through the rite of baptism.
- Paul – *ekklesia* occurs 65 times
  - In most instances, it refers to the local church
  - Paul is the first NT writer to use the word in its plural, signifying the equality of separate local churches
    - *“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you” (Romans 16:16).*
  - In Ephesians and Colossians the word is used of the entire assembly of followers of Jesus: the Church universal (Eph 1:22; 3:10; 5:23-24)
    - *And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body (Col 1:18)*
  - The actual assembly meeting for worship (1Cor 14:19, 35)
  - *First of all, I hear that when you meet as a church there are divisions among you, and to a degree I believe it. (1 Cor 11:18)*
  - Images of the Church from Paul:
    - The body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23)
    - The bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-32)
    - A City/Temple (Eph 2:19-20ff)
    - The Pillar and Foundation of Truth (1 Tim 3:15)

- John
      - Found in 3 Jn 6,9,10 and also 20 times in Revelation in reference to particular churches
      - Christ is the vine, his followers the branches (Jn 15)
      - The flock of the Lord entrusted to Peter (Jn 10:1ff; 21:15ff)
- A look at the Patristic period
  - Dominant use of “Church” refers to local communities
  - A gradual increase in the Church standing for the universal entity
  - The adjective “catholic” first appears in Ignatius of Antioch around 109:
  - “To the church of God the Father and of the beloved Jesus Christ which is at Smyrna in Asia.... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.” (*Letter to the Smyrna*)
  - What existed were many local communities united by bonds of fraternal fellowship.
- Conclusions
  - “Church” signifies simultaneously the liturgical assembly, the local community, as well as the universal community of believers.
  - Local churches are united in a single organization, called the Church in the epistles of Paul. The reality is present in other writings, even though the word is not employed.
  - The Church has an intimate union with her founder, Christ and derives her life from him.
  - This assembly is the heir of the covenant and promises of Israel, which reach their fulfillment in Jesus and His Church.
  - “The Church is the new community of individuals, instituted by Christ as a ‘calling together’ of all those called to be part of the new Israel in order to live the divine life, according to the graces and demands of the covenant established by the sacrifice of the cross. This calling together entails for each one a call which requires a response of faith and cooperation in the purpose of the new community, determined by Him who gives the call” (Paul Haffner, Mystery of the Church, pg.15).
- Q&A
- Announcements
  - Materials available
  - Reading for next time
  - Book sales next week
  - Lolek tickets available
  - March for life info

- Sunday night talks – “The Catholic Difference”
- Closing prayer

**St. Thérèse’s Prayer for Priests**

*‘O Holy Father, may the torrents of love flowing from the sacred wounds of Thy Divine Son bring forth priests like unto the beloved disciple John who stood at the foot of the Cross; priests: who as a pledge of Thine own most tender love will lovingly give Thy Divine Son to the souls of men.*

*May Thy priests be faithful guardians of Thy Church, as John was of Mary, whom he received into his house. Taught by this loving Mother who suffered so much on Calvary, may they display a mother’s care and thoughtfulness towards Thy children. May they teach souls to enter into close union with Thee through Mary who, as the Gate of Heaven, is specially the guardian of the treasures of Thy Divine Heart.*

*Give us priests who are on fire, and who are true children of Mary, priests who will give Jesus to souls with the same tenderness and care with which Mary carried the Little Child of Bethlehem.*

*Mother of sorrows and of love, out of compassion for Thy beloved Son, open in our hearts deep wells of love, so that we may console Him and give Him a generation of priests formed in thy school and having all the tender thoughtfulness of thine own spotless love.’*

*Amen.*