

Gifts of Finest Wheat

Fall 2009 - Ecclesiology

October 15, 2009

Session 3 – The Church is One

- Prayer – from St. Teresa of Avila

Lord, grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by You, always follow Your plans, and perfectly accomplish Your Holy Will.

Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of my life, I may do whatever You require of me. Help me respond to the slightest prompting of Your Grace, so that I may be Your trustworthy instrument for Your honor.

May Your Will be done in time and in eternity--by me, in me, and through me.

Amen.

- Questions from last time? From the reading?
- Our goal this evening: develop an understanding of the oneness of the Church as professed in the Nicene Creed in light of the Tradition of the Church, with an emphasis on the teachings of Vatican II.
- The Basis for the Church's Unity
 - Trinitarian – The source of the Church; exemplar found in the unity of persons in the Trinity
 - Christological
 - One Church founded by Christ (Matthew 16:17-19)
 - Body of Christ; Bride of Christ
 - Christ's prayer for unity: credibility of the Christian message
 - The Spirit – the one soul of the Church; principle of unity
 - The Eucharist
 - Making present the self-giving of Christ
 - "Communion" in the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16)
 - "**Because** there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17).
 - Sign and instrument of communion with God and one another

- “Body of Christ” – The flesh which died on the cross for us; the Eucharistic body of Christ; the Church as body of Christ
 - A note on intercommunion: “Catholic ministers may lawfully administer the sacraments only to Catholic members of Christ's faithful, who equally may lawfully receive them only from Catholic ministers.” [Canon # 844.1, CIC]
 - Elements Constituting this Unity
 - “They devoted themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and **fellowship**, to **the breaking of the bread** and the **prayers**” (Acts 2:42)
 - Charity “binds everything together in perfect harmony.”
 - Profession of one faith
 - Common celebration of worship, particularly the sacraments
 - Apostolic Succession through Holy Orders
 - Diversity in Unity
 - Chrisms, ministries, forms of life within each particular Church
 - Traditions of liturgy and culture among various particular Churches
 - Western and Eastern Code of Canon Law
- The Church of Christ Subsists in the Catholic Church (LG 8)
 - Previously expressed: “The one Church of Christ is the Catholic Church”
 - Misunderstandings and false interpretations of the use of “subsists in.”
 - Subsists=“to exist” or “to remain”
 - A proper balance between two doctrinal realities:
 - Only within the Catholic Church constituted as an earthly, visible reality do the full means of sanctification and truth persist as willed by Christ
 - Elements of sanctification and truth exist outside the visible bounds of the catholic Church
- Who belongs to the Church?
 - All people are called to belong to this People of God and belong to or are ordered to it in different ways
 - Fully incorporated (**LG 14**):
 - Possess the Spirit of Christ
 - Accept **all** the means of salvation given to the Church
 - Together with her **entire** organization
 - Profession of faith
 - Sacraments
 - Ecclesiastical Government
 - Ontological effect on the member of the Church
- Wounds to the Church’s Unity

- Heresy, Apostasy, Schism
- Assyrian Churches (Nestorian) from the 5th century
- Old Oriental Churches – rejected the teachings of Chalcedon in 451 AD (Monophysite in origin) ; reunion in the 20th century
- Eastern Orthodox – 1054
- Reformation -16th century
- “Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature” (UR 1).
- “Men on both sides were to blame” (UR 3)
- Those born into separated communities – “One cannot charge with the sin of separation...The Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brother...All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have the right to be called Christians...” (UR 3)
- “Many elements of sanctification and of truth...”
- “Christ’s Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as a means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church” (UR 3)
- The Church’s Relation to other Christians
 - Churches – Eastern Orthodox
 - Maintain apostolic succession and valid Eucharist
 - “The Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church” (DI 17)
 - Closest bonds
 - Ecclesial Communities (UR 22)
 - Lack valid Episcopal ordination and Eucharist
 - “Are not Churches in the proper sense” (DI 17)
 - Special mention of the Anglican communions – “Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist” (UR 13).
 - Through baptism are in a certain though imperfect communion with the Church
 - Not members of Christ’s Church through their own communities, but through valid baptism
 - Used as a “means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church” (UR3).
 - But the Catholic Church is not “one way” among other equally valid options
- The Church’s Relation to Non-Christians
 - Jews – linked through their belief in revelation and the covenant promises of God

- Muslims – “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims...together with us they adore the one, merciful God” (LG 16)
- Non-Christian religions – united in a common origin and end of all human beings
- All goodness and truth found in these religions are “a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may have life” (LG 16)
- The Necessity of the church for Salvation
 - “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16)
 - “This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1Tim 2:3-4).
 - “*No Salvation Outside the Church*”
 - In patristic times, used in reference to Christians who had separated themselves from The Catholic Church
 - Introduced by St. Cyprian and taken up by St. Augustine – No salvation as long as they continued in adherence to their sect
 - *De facto* a grave sin against charity
 - By mediaeval times, *it was assumed the Gospel had been preached to all peoples*; therefore no hope of salvation for anyone who had heard about Christ and failed to believe in him.
 - However, the common belief was also that one would be condemned for unbelief that was not personally culpable
 - This found formulation by the Magisterium in the Lateran IV Council (1215), Pope Boniface VIII’s *Unam Sanctam* (1302), and the Council of Florence (15th century)
 - Within a century of the Council of Florence, explorers discovered peoples in Africa, Asia, and America. - -This necessitated a new approach.
 - Protestants later generally took a pessimistic view of salvation for those without explicit faith in Christ
 - Within Catholicism, two opposing views:
 - Jansenists held to medieval dictum and went beyond it; no grace given outside Church whatsoever; this was condemned in 1713 by Pope Clement XI
 - Jesuit missionaries – God did not deny to anyone the grace necessary for salvation; there must be the *possibility* of salvation for them without explicit Christian faith or actual membership in the Church
 - “Unconscious desire” for the Church?
 - “What has changed is not really the basic doctrine that is at stake, but the way Christians judge those who do not belong to the church...their belief was that they were all guilty of refusing to accept Christian faith, on the grounds that the gospel had been sufficiently presented to them, and

that therefore they had no excuse for not believing it.... The underlying dogma has always really been what Vatican II explicitly declared it to be: 'There is no salvation for those who are culpably outside the Church.' The difference between Florence and Vatican II is that Florence judged all those outside guilty, and Vatican II presumed them to be innocent. What has changed is a way of judging people" (**Opinion** of theologian Francis Sullivan"

- "All salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is His body."
- Necessity based on two considerations: the necessity of Christ (the body of Christ) and of Baptism (the door to the Church)
- "They could not be saved, who, **knowing** that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, **would refuse** either to enter it or remain in it" (LG 14)
- "Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and , moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation" (LG16)
- "For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (GS 22).
- *Dominus Iesus*
 - Syncretism; Indifferentism
 - Regarding revelation in Jesus Christ and His salvific action.
 - Upon this follows the unicity of the Church
 - A historical continuity –rooted in apostolic succession – between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church
 - Not "one among many"
- Authentic Ecumenism
 - What it is not: Compromise on absolutes; syncretism; "false" communion.
 - "Their ecumenical action must be fully and sincerely Catholic, that is to say, faithful o the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church" (UR 24)
 - Permanent renewal of the Church
 - Conversion of heart
 - Prayer in common – NOT intercommunion of Eucharist
 - "Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, "have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of

the sacrament of Holy Orders.²³⁶ It is for this reason that, for the Catholic Church, Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible" (CCC 1400).

- Fraternal knowledge of each other
 - Ecumenical formation of faithful and priests
 - Dialogue among theologians
 - Collaboration among Christians in service to mankind
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- Questions?
 - Announcements
 - Reading for next time
 - Lolek tickets available
 - March for life info

- Closing prayer –
**Heavenly Father,
look upon our community of faith
which is the Church of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Help us to witness to his love
by loving all our fellow creatures without exception.
Under the leadership
of the Holy Father and the Bishops
keep us faithful to Christ's mission
of calling all men and women
to your service so that there may be
"one fold and one shepherd."
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

Amen.