

The Gospel of John

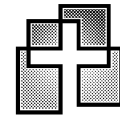


Notes From the Podium

These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson. Please use as an aid to help you incorporate the main message of the lesson into your lecture.

“In the beginning was the Word. . .”

- 1) What is a ‘word’?
 - a) Make clear the concept of a ‘word’ to better understand what it means to say that Jesus is the “Word” of the invisible God.
 - i) A word is comprised of two parts: 1) an outward, tangible, sensible and incarnate expression that points to 2) an invisible meaning or reality.
 - ii) Jesus is the outward, tangible, sensible and incarnate expression that makes manifest the invisible God.
 - (1) Jesus, however, is not merely a visible sign pointing to an invisible reality. Rather, in this case Jesus *is* that which He represents. He does not merely point to God. He does not merely signify God. He is God.
 - (2) This is also the foundation for the Sacraments. They are not merely signs and symbols that point to some meaning and significance; rather they actually communicate what they signify. Sacraments make present the grace they signify.
 - b) Specifically address the use of ‘words’ in John’s Gospel.
 - i) The ‘words’ used in John’s Gospel are taken not only from the Greek language two-thousand years ago, but are also born out of the salvation history that preceded it as presented in the Old Testament.
 - ii) John employs the use of double meaning.
 - (1) Often words have more than a single meaning. Look at a dictionary and see the multiple definitions of each word. This is even more the case with Scriptural language—not only is there a common use, but a Scriptural use as well. A word may connote much more than its secular meaning implies, e.g., words associated with the Exodus, the prophets, or the creation accounts in Genesis.
- 2) To say that the Word (Jesus) was in the beginning primarily reveals that Jesus is divine and secondarily reveals at least two aspects about what this fact necessarily implies.
 - a) First, Jesus is the One from whom all existence flows.
 - i) Jesus as one with the Father and Holy Spirit creates from nothing. This is distinctly divine. Man can only create by synthesis, that is to say, bring things together, where God draws from nothing other than Himself.
 - ii) Jesus, divine in nature, sustains creation—if for one moment He ceased willing you to exist, you would cease to exist.



Notes From the Podium (cont.)

Catholic Scripture Study

- b) Second, Jesus is ‘in the beginning’ in that He is first not merely as a matter of chronology but of primacy. He is the One whom nothing is greater.
 - i) All that exists can be divided into two categories: that which is created and that which is not created. The only thing that belongs in this latter category of ‘uncreated’ is God. John is making it perfectly clear that Jesus who is one with the Father and Holy Spirit, are the only occupants of this category.
- 3) Aside from revealing Jesus’ divine nature, why is John so glaringly connecting his first words to the creation account in Genesis? Answer: Creation & Redemption are one seamless plan.
 - a) We see in the Creation account that the possibility of sin is the price God pays for our freedom.
 - i) This is evidenced in the Original Sin. God makes us in His image and likeness—free persons with an intellective soul to love and to be loved. The price paid for this freedom is the possibility for sin.
 - ii) At creation this potential for sin is actualized in the Original Sin and our need for Redemption is established.
 - b) Grief is the price paid for love. With sin comes the need for redemption thereby linking creation and redemption. That God plans to redeem man is an act of His love that now requires suffering.
 - i) Sin gives rise to grief and suffering. God (who is Love) creates man in His image (with freedom); man sins (Original sin) and gives rise to grief. Therefore, grief is the price paid for love—look at the Passion of Christ.
 - c) With Jesus there is a new creation.
 - i) It is through the Word made flesh and the redemptive work of that same Word that our humanity can become divinized—incorporated into divine life as true children of God.
 - ii) The divine Word became flesh that those in the flesh (man) might through Him (the Word) become divinized.
 - d) John the Baptist is the prophet who serves to connect the Old Covenant that established the *order of nature* to the New Covenant that infuses that nature with grace.
 - i) The incarnation, God becoming man, the Word becoming flesh is the first and primary event that infuses nature with grace. A human nature is infused with grace.
 - ii) The text of John suggests that there may have been some who were unable to make this transition and became stuck on John himself. The Christian faith depends upon making this transition.

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