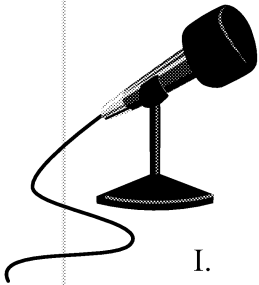


The Gospel of John

Catholic Scripture Study

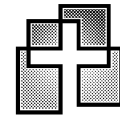


Notes From the Podium

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.

I. Scriptural Context

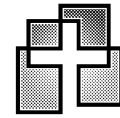
- a. How does this passage connect with that which preceded it? How does it connect with that which follows?
 - i. As we have seen up until this point Faith is a divine gift given by the Heavenly Father necessary for accepting the truth for who Jesus is. We have seen this gift of Faith being offered first to the Jews (temple priests/elite and Nicodemus), then the Samaritans/'half Jews' (Samaritan woman at the well), finally to a non-Jew (the official). First, we note the irony. Second, we note the expansion – the gift of Faith being offered to those outside of the Jewish faith.
 1. John's gospel depicts Jesus moving in a deliberate order offering the gift of Faith that will lead to salvation. He begins in Jerusalem with the temple elite and Nicodemus representing His offering the divine gift of Faith to the Jews and is rejected. He proceeds to Jacob's well and encounters a Samaritan woman thereby offering her and the Samaritans the gift of Faith and is only successful after some persuasive dialog. Finally, He offers the gift of Faith to a non-Jew in His encounter with the official. The official approaches Him and accepts readily with no rejection or any persuasive dialog. The one's who should be this open to the divine gift of Faith are not, while the one outside of the Old Testament covenant accepts the gift with no resistance. This irony demonstrates the extent to which human belief had corrupted the true belief of the Jews.
 2. Given that John assumes a knowledge of the other gospels as well as the Acts of the Apostles, one could conclude that John is offering this account of Jesus that depicts what He later charges the Apostles to do in His name in Acts 1:8. This is the evangelical mission given to the Church – inviting all to receive the divine gift of faith including those outside the Jewish faith.
 - a. The Apostles continue the salvific work of Christ on earth as they are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into the Church and are guided by that same Holy Spirit to fulfill what Jesus begins here in John.
 - b. Bishops are the successors to the Apostles, who in Word (Sacred Scripture and Teaching) & Deed (Sacraments), continue the saving work of Christ. In each sacrament their hands connect the faithful to an unbroken line of the laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit which goes all the way back to the original twelve apostles and the Jesus the Christ Himself. Through this unbroken sacramental line of imposition of hands Christ hands reach through history and into every land.



Notes From the Podium (cont.)

Catholic Scripture Study

- II. Samaritan Woman
- a. The Points to Ponder describe in detail how the Samaritans came to be and how they were perceived by the Jews (people of Judah). The Samaritans were regarded as “half-breeds and as traitors to the covenant of Moses.”
 - b. Ten tribes of Israel (aka Israel) break away from the two tribes (aka Judah) that remain in Jerusalem. God raised up prophets who address this great schism of the 12 tribes who together should be faithful to God as one kingdom worshiping in the one Temple. The ten tribes (Israel) are rebuked by the prophets for defecting and not being faithful as a bride should be to her groom – in spite of hardships. However, the prophets note that someday they will be reunited with their bridegroom (the Lord).
 - c. Notice the location. A well is a place of thirst where one’s desire for life is quenched. Furthermore, this is Jacob’s well. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel and then fathers the 12 Tribes. The well of Jacob (Israel) is therefore an image of Jesus who is the true well of life – the well promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel) and his descendents. The true well of life has arrived.
 - d. Note also that as soon as this eternal water is offered, Jesus brings up the issue of her husband.
 - e. Bring all of the above together and we can see that Jesus is speaking to a situation beyond the mere series of attempted marriages of just this one woman. He is addressing not merely her, but the whole of the Samaritan people whom she now represents. Standing at Jacob’s/Israel’s well there is a sense of returning to the true faith of Israel, returning to her original faith that covenantally betrothed her and her people to God, as a bride to a groom.
 - i. This abrupt, seemingly off topic request to get her husband should strike us as odd. It compels us to probe for deeper meaning as opposed to thinking Our Lord is just being obtuse.
 - ii. The woman understands the various levels at which Our Lord is speaking. “You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband.” He speaks not merely of her particular situation, but that of all Samaritans. This is verified by her claim that Jesus must be a prophet. Remember, the Samaritans rejected the prophets while Judah accepted them. Israel didn’t want to hear that they shouldn’t have broken away and divided the kingdom. So for her to say “you are a prophet” is equivalent to the Jews (people of Judah) saying “you are THE PROPHET – the prophet of whom all prophets were a mere foreshadow.
 - iii. It is also evident that she understands Jesus at this deeper level. It is she who makes the connection and leaps to the topic of worship from the topic at hand of husbands. “Our Father worshipped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where man ought to worship.” (vv20) This is not merely an issue of geography. It is an issue of fidelity.



Notes From the Podium (cont.)

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- iv. Given what we know from the previous text of John's Gospel, Jesus is the Eternal Word of God; the Eternal Son of the Father; the Messiah; and now the Prophet. This knowledge applied to Jesus' words, "and he whom you now have is not your husband" quite aptly applies to Him – the Eternal Bridegroom of the bride He has set out to gather from all nations and purify.
 - v. He is calling the Samaritans to return and reclaim the inheritance promised to their father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). He is calling the Samaritans to become part of His bride – The Church.
- III. Applying the previous lesson of John's Gospel to this account of the Samaritan woman and the healing of the official's son.
- a. The contrast between the divine gift of Faith and human faith (belief): human faith is proven to be insufficient and is an insurmountable problem when self-righteousness exists behind one's human faith and refuses to give way (to be humble) and submit oneself to God above.
 - i. We see with the Samaritan woman and her fellow towns people that after a mere, albeit insightful, exchange they submit to God and receive the gift of Faith.
 - ii. We see with the official a non-Jew, not even a half Jew like the Samaritans, approach Jesus and submit to Faith that comes from above before even a verbal exchange takes place.
 - iii. Notice the irony: Jews do not submit to God and receive the gift of Faith after much dialog (Temple elite / Nicodemus with the exception of Nathaniel); Samaritans submit to God and receive gift of Faith after some dialog; a non-Jew, non-Samaritan submits to God and receives the gift of Faith without any dialog at all. The Jews who should be the first to accept Faith from above and in turn believe in Him are the least able to do so. The first signs (in the Book of Signs) converts not the Jews or half-Jews, but the non-Jew official. The official was the only one who did not need a sign beyond that of Cana. Now, the signs that came from the gift of Faith received by outsiders (such as the official) will be used to convert many of the Jews – because it was outsiders who responded with the greatest ease to submit to God.
 - iv. People of Judah (the Jews) and Israel are being rebuked. Not only have they not done what they should have done – prepare the world for the messiah. But they have in the process hardened their own hearts and no longer submit to God but only to themselves. This self-righteous approach to God leads only to mere human faith, which is not the divine gift of Faith that leads on to eternal life.

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