

The Gospel of John

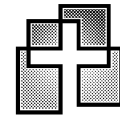
Catholic Scripture Study



Notes From the Podium

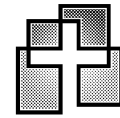
These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson. Please use as an aid to help you incorporate the main message of the lesson into your lecture.

- I. The New Creation
 - a. “In the beginning”; seven days of creation; the Spirit hovering over the water – these are all clues connecting what is happening in John’s gospel with the creation account. It could be said John is depicting a “new creation.”
 - b. Why a new creation?
 - i. In the beginning man was in harmony with God, spouse, himself and creation. The original sin damaged all these relationships like a pebble thrown into an elaborately orchestrated system of gears. Everything in the created order was impacted.
 - ii. In his fallen state man was incapable of fulfilling his destiny - proven to be true over and over again by a constant cycle of covenants and sin. Man could not remain faithful to a covenantal bond (sacred familial bond) with God. This condition of fallen man sets the stage for the need of a new creation.
- II. Miracle at Cana
 - a. That this event takes place on the seventh day of John’s gospel underscores its covenantal importance, as the seventh day is the sign of God’s first covenant with man as portrayed in the Genesis creation account.
 - i. For more information on what a covenant is see: www.salvationhistory.com. The Beginner Course on Sacred Scripture will introduce this essential concept.
 - b. That a marriage feast is taking place on the seventh day of this “new creation” and that it is the context for Jesus’ first sign/miracle is of great importance. The context is itself revelatory about what is actually taking place here.
 - i. When and where did the first marriage occur between a man and a woman? Genesis, the creation account, depicts man’s first nuptial union between Adam and Eve arranged by God.
 1. God set out to create man (male and female) in His own image. He began with the male and declared this not to be good, mainly that he should not be alone. God refers to Himself in the first person plural; “our image,” and “let us.” God is Himself a communion of divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – yet one God. Alone the male could not love or experience ‘communion’ with another who is his equal. God creates Eve – Adam’s bride. Now they begin to reflect more the image of their Creator. They are of the same nature, while related to one another as a communion of persons. The Father gives Himself to the Son, the Son to the Father. So, too, does the male give his whole self to the female, and she offers the same in return. Furthermore, just as the



communion between the Father and the Son gives rise to a third divine person, the Holy Spirit, so too does the communion between the man and the woman give rise to a third person – a child. The Divine Trinity is reflected in the natural created order by a human trinity – the family. This points to the great dignity of marriage and family. It is a divine creation intended to reflect something of the interior life of God.

2. This “new creation” has on its seventh day a marriage feast. Now marriage will take on a new meaning, in Christ, which ‘piggy-backs’ on the old. Marriage not only reflects something of the interior life of God (as designed by God from the beginning) but it now also reflects something of God’s love for man. We see in this passage a new Adam (Christ) and a new Eve (Mary who is a sign of the Church to come). Marriage now represents how God weds Himself to man (the Church) as the word made flesh. He will enter into a one flesh union with the Church and His conjugal act will be the crucifixion. Marriage becomes a sacrament (a sacred oath) that reflects not only God’s love in Himself, but also His love for man.
- ii. Now the context of the seventh day is also revelatory for yet another reason – it corresponds to the ancient Jewish practice of purifications.
1. Note the specific mention of the water jars – they were there for such a purification ritual. This practice is rooted in Numbers 19:11-13. The practice is to cleanse a man who has been made unclean so that when he approaches the “tabernacle” he does not defile the Lord. These washings are to take place not only on the seventh day but the third day as well. A careful counting of the days from where John begins, shows John referring to the day of the miracle at Cana as both the third and the seventh day – each counting from different starting points, of course.
 2. The significance is great. As stated at the opening of the gospel, Jesus is God “tabernacled” among us (John 1:14), implying that the people must be cleansed – purified if they are to approach Him. This cleansing/washing/baptism would seem to be connected intimately to the ritual washing He just took part in – His baptism by John in the Jordan. What this “cleansing” entails appeals to the past in order that it might allude to the future. In the Exodus, Moses’ ‘first sign’ like John’s recorded ‘first sign’ of Jesus here at Cana involves the changing of water (with particular mention of the water in *jars*) to blood. In Exodus the river and even water in jars turned to blood. In Cana Jesus turns the water in these jars into a different “blood” the “blood of the grape.” This is how the ancient Hebrew refers to wine. In the Exodus, this ‘first sign’ served the purpose of leading the people out of their slavery, (particularly the slavery of idolatry that defiled them and made them unclean), through the waters of the Red Sea to worship God in the Promised Land. This is presumably



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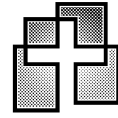
the same purpose of this first sign in John's gospel – to lead people through the waters of baptism to be set free from defilement in order to worship God in the Promised Land of the Eternal Jerusalem. In the Exodus, blood as the first sign and the blood of the lamb was brushed over doorposts for the angel of death to pass-over. This time the blood is the first sign as well – blood of the grape, set in purification jars it will be used to wash the defiled people and it will be consumed by them as part of the nuptial exchange between Jesus and His bride, the Church. The blood of the grape will not merely remain so. It will become the blood of the new lamb – the Lamb of God whom John identifies to be Jesus in the preceding text. At Cana, water becomes the blood of the grape; and the blood of the grape will become at the last supper, the blood of the Lamb of God.

c. Mary at Cana

- i. Mary is the new Eve. Given all the Genesis allusions and references, it begins to make sense as to why Jesus refers to His mother as “woman.” “Woman” is a title. Mary is the “woman” foretold in Genesis 3:15. She is the one through whom the ‘undoing’ of what was done in the garden will proceed. Just as through Eve the reign of sin was inaugurated by the prompting of Adam, so now is the Reign of God inaugurated by Mary's prompting of Jesus to perform His first miracle.
- ii. Mary as the new Eve is a model of fidelity, whereas the first Eve is one of infidelity; one who was not faithful to God. In Mary we see in one person an image of what the Church will be – a faithful bride to the new Adam; a faithful mother to the human race; and a faithful daughter of the Eternal Father.
- iii. Mary is the perfect created human. It is no accident that the perfect created human is a female. We see more perfectly in this gender the high destiny of man which is to enter into divine life with God through a nuptial union with the Eternal Son. The collection of men (male and female) into the corporate body known as the Church is therefore the bride of the Eternal Bridegroom. It is proper then that the one perfect created human is a woman because her gender reflects man's high destiny.

III. The “Lamb of God” goes to the Temple on the feast of the Passover.

- a. After John has made clear that: 1) Jesus is the Lamb of God 2) who is one with the Eternal Father 3) sent to undo what was done at the first creation and 4) by inaugurating a new creation in His own blood, John depicts Jesus going to the Temple at the time of the Passover.
- b. The Lamb of God has arrived to be sacrificed. And it is here that he explains how this will take place.
 - i. The sacrifice will take place in the true Temple (not a man-made construction) – the Temple of His body.
 - ii. This temple (both the actual temple building in Jerusalem and His body) will be destroyed. The Temple of His body, however, will not remain so – He will raise it in three days.



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- IV. Note: The wedding feast at Cana is a good example as to how John requires us to look back (to the Old Testament) that we might see what is happening at present (in his gospel). This enlightened (via Old Testament familiarity) understanding of what takes place in a given moment of John's gospel will enable us to better understand what will happen. By seeing what occurred in the past, we see a foreshadowing of what will happen in the future.

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