

The Gospel of John

Catholic Scripture Study

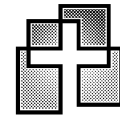


Notes From the Podium

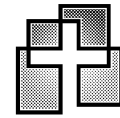
These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson. Please use as an aid to help you incorporate the main message of the lesson into your lecture.

[In so far as it makes sense, the lecture notes will continue to teach by way of three approaches. However, the order in which each approach is presented will be determined based upon the order that better serves the presentation of the material. Note below that the order of approach for this lesson is different than previous lessons, while the approaches themselves have not changed.]

- I. (John 8:12-59) First Approach – Old Testament background as it bears upon the text.
 - a. The Law of Moses requires two witnesses to verify testimony.
 - i. This is important because the Jews are accusing Him of defying the Law in that He is bearing witness to Himself lacking the two witnesses necessary to conclude that something is true. (vv 17)
 - ii. According to Our Lord there are, in fact, two witnesses: The Father and Jesus (vv 18)
 - b. The theme of “Light” along with “Water” was presented earlier in John’s gospel particularly as it related to the Feast of Tabernacles.
 - i. Our Lord is like the pillar of light that led the Israelites through the wilderness out of bondage and slavery. (Exodus 13:21-22)
 - ii. Our Lord is the living water, which gives eternal life. Our Lord is like the water that came from the stone struck by Moses – providing life-giving water in the desert.
- II. (John 8:12-59) Second Approach – what is happening in the moment?
 - a. Jesus speaks to a group of Jews, both Pharisees and His own disciples. (vv 13 refers to the Pharisees; vv 31 refers to Jesus shifting His speech to “those who had believed in Him.”)
 - b. The Pharisees apply the Law of Moses requiring two witnesses to testify to the truth to Jesus – concluding that Jesus is not speaking the truth.
 - i. There is in this passage the basic question of authority.
 - ii. This question is always the bottom line question to any religious matter.
 1. “Upon whose authority is something claimed to be true?”
 2. In the final analysis, a Christian believes that God is the authority – this is to say that God has revealed Himself from the beginning through salvation history (of which the Jews play a central part) and finally in the person of Jesus the Christ who is the full revelation of God- the event/revelation to which salvation history pointed.



3. This demonstrates the practical necessity of the Church. The teaching of the Church is what connects us today to the teaching of Christ who is the invisible God made man. It is Only in this way can we say that God (Jesus) is our authority. Without a divinely preserved ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC Church we could never trust the teaching handed down to us in Jesus' name. There would be no guarantee that it hadn't been changed.
4. It should be noted that New Testament Scripture is a product of the early Church and therefore not even it can stand on its own authority but rather rests upon the authority of the Church.
- c. Jesus responds that His testimony is true and in verse 18 provides the necessary witnesses to verify His testimony, "I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me."
 - i. Jesus continues to elaborate on the authority of His that comes from God, His Father.
- d. The conversation in verse 31 shifts in focus to "those who had believed in Him." Jesus addresses His own followers, the content of which can be summed up in the "truly, truly" statements.
 - i. Vv. 34 "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."
 1. Their response: "Abraham is our father."
 2. Jesus retorts that their father is the devil, the father of lies. Vv. 44 And that they are not of God. Vv. 47
 - ii. Vv. 51 responding to their accusation that He is a Samaritan and has a demon Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death."
 1. The Jewish followers of Jesus respond noting that Abraham died, the prophets died – who does He think He is?
 2. Jesus retorts that He is glorified, not by Himself, but by His Father – who is the One they claim to be their God. He makes a comment about Abraham, "your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad."
 3. The Jews respond, how could Abraham have know you?
 - iii. Vv. 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, ;before Abraham was, I am."
 1. He effectively just equivocated Himself with God.
 2. They respond by picking up stones ready to take Him out.



Notes From the Podium (cont.)

Catholic Scripture Study

III. Third Approach – the pastoral points

- a. Vv. 12 “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus is the light that will not only illumine our path, but will show us the way to freedom – to the freedom of becoming children of God.
 - i. There are two important presumptions being made...
 1. ...first, we are in darkness – effectively made blind.
 2. ...second, we can come to see our own blindness. This is what leads us to cooperate with the grace of God to accept the divine gift of Faith via baptism.
 - a. We must make a “space” within us to receive the gift of faith (v. 37).
 - b. Self-righteousness is the great obstacle Our Lord is facing. Humility is necessary to make way for the gift of faith. In order to acknowledge one’s own need before God and then accept another as one’s savior requires humility.
 - i. St. Augustine when asked by a student what one needs to enter into eternal life responded, “you need three things: humility, humility and humility.”
 - c. To recognize our own blindness is necessary to be open to receive the light sent by God.
- b. Vv. 44 “you are of your father the devil.” The effects of sin are severe.
 - i. The fall of original sin has made us children of the devil. This is a grave consequence.
 1. To be a child of the devil is to be a slave.
 2. To understand such a reign of terror, study what life was like in a concentration camp during WWII. Hitler is to his guards as the devil is to one of his ‘children.’ It is a family of fear, a hierarchy of slavery – all for the purpose of abusing. It is the exact opposite of a family.
 3. We are in grave need of a savior.
 - ii. Furthermore, the effect of sin is so grave, it not only disfigures us and separates us from God but it has set man on the course to kill Him.
- c. Vv. 44 (continued) “and your will is to do your father’s desire.”
 - i. Desire is at the heart of the matter. Whoever is our father, it is in his desire we will share.
 1. To be of God is to share in His desire.
 2. To be of the devil is to share in his desire.
 - ii. If humility is the necessary condition to make room for the divine gift of faith, then desire is that which fuels it - propelling one forward to follow the light who is Christ.

Notes From the Podium are written by Fr. Patrick Winslow. All rights reserved. No portion of these materials may be reproduced without written permission. Proper acknowledgement should be given to the author if these notes are read in a lecture.