

Night III: November 13, 2009
Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation
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VI. Christ and the Church: The Church was built upon the Foundation of the Apostles as a community of faith, hope, and charity (make note of Baptism as the birth canal of the Church). Through the Apostles, we come to Jesus himself. The Apostles in their witness through time reflect the face of Jesus. Their mission has been and continues to be situated within the mystery of communion that involves the entire people of God.

1. The institution of the Twelve: mark 3:13-16. The calling of the Twelve was a mark of the reunification of the Kingdom of heaven here on earth. Together with Christ, the Twelve are witnesses and heralds of the coming of the Kingdom of God.
 - a. In choosing the Twelve, introducing them into communion of life with himself and involving them in his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom in words and works, Jesus wants to say that the definitive time has arrived in which to constitute the new people of God, the people of the Twelve Tribes, which now becomes a universal people, his Church
2. Witnesses of Christ: In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul presents the Church to us as a structure “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph.2:20). In addition, John illustrated the twelve from the eschatological perspective with the Church represented as the heavenly Jerusalem where the “twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev.21:14)
 - a. The cornerstone in the Old Testament was the foundation stone (the first stone) that lined up the whole rest of the structure. It set up the whole edifice.
 - i. Consult word of the week on *Peter*
 - b. The lines of Jesus’ conversation with the first two future Apostles are most expressive. To his question, ‘What do you seek?’, they replied with another question: “Rabbi”, where are you staying” (Jn.1:38). Jesus’ response was an invitation: “Come and see” (Jn.1:39). Come, so that you will be able to see. Christ is not imposing, but proposing.
 - i. Consequently, this is how the adventure for the Apostles began, as an encounter of people who are open to one another. For the disciples, it was the beginning of a direct acquaintance with the Teacher, seeing where he was staying and starting to get to know him. Before they were to proclaim a Doctrine, they were to witness to Christ. Before they were sent out to preach, they had to be with Jesus. The whole foundation of proclamation was and is based upon an invitation to enter into the mystery of communion with Christ.
3. The Gift of Communion: Through the apostolic ministry of the Church, a community gathered by the Son of God, has lived on through passing times, building up and nourishing the communion in Christ and in the Holy Spirit to which all can experience the same love of the father that the Apostles came to know. Pope Clement of Rome, the third successor to Peter once noted that “the Church organically structured under the guidance of her shepherds has thus continued down through the ages to live in the world as a mystery of communion in her sacramental identity and thereby gaining access to participate in the divine nature of God (2 Pet.1:4)...The Church as a family of God (1 Tim.3:15)...quote JP II on the Trinity and family.
 - a. 2 Cor.13:14: “The grace of the Lord and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”. The people of God are brought into unity by the grace of God and into fellowship with one another by the Eucharistic meal. In the Eucharist Jesus nourishes us and unites us with himself. This kind of communion draws out our fraternal relations in Christ. *Koinonia* is participation by communion.
 - b. Communion is truly the good news, the remedy given to us to fight the loneliness that threatens everyone today, the precious gift that makes us feel welcomed by God. This truly is what the people of God shine brightly like a beacon of hope for the world. We repent that we might be in communion with God

4. Safeguarding the Gift: St. Irenaeus once said, “Wherever the Church is God’s Spirit is too, and wherever God’s Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace, for the Spirit is Truth”. Thus, a deep and penetrating bond exists between the Holy Spirit and the Church.
 - a. The Church is wholly of the Spirit but has a structure, its apostolic succession, which is responsible for guaranteeing that the Church endures in the truth given by Christ, from which is the source of love for the world. We see this structure come out beautifully in what takes place in Acts 2:42: “And they were steadfast to the Apostles teaching and fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Communion is born from faith inspired by apostolic preaching, nourished in the breaking of the bread and prayer, and expresses in fraternal love and service.
 - i. In this passage, you have all the essential actions of the Church’s life shown forth in the early believing community of Jerusalem. (1)Catechesis, (2) interpersonal communion by fidelity, (3) the Eucharist, and (4) praise and petitions. They were a family: they learned together, lived together, worshipped together, ate together, and prayed together.
 - ii. The gift of communion is safeguarded by its liturgy, catechesis, nourishment, prayers and fellowship, which was handed down by the Apostles...who have and continue to act as custodians of the Deposit of Faith.

VII: Communion in Time: Sacred Tradition: The Holy Spirit appears to us as the guarantor of the active presence of the mystery in history, the one who ensures its actualization down through the centuries. Thanks to the Gift of the Holy Spirit, it will always be possible for subsequent generation to experience the Risen Life just as the earliest believing communities had... Consult word of the week on **Counselor**. Consequently, what we experience today in the sacramental life of the Church is not of something in the past, but of the present, in her Liturgy and in her life we encounter God today as the Church community did 2000 years ago.

1. Christ explicitly entrusted to the Apostles the task of making disciples of all nations, guaranteeing his presence and help to the end of the age (cf. Mt.28:19). He gives them the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to truth and love (Acts 5:32). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have the NT writings, the sacramental life, the life of the faith in liturgy, and the teaching of the Apostles, which is the up-to-date reality of all that Christ intended-Tradition.
 - a. Tradition lives in conversation with the past making it visible to the present; the continuation through time of the mission of Christ which shares his passionate love for all cultures. Tradition is a divine intervention where God makes present Christ the same to us today as he was 2000 years ago; that every generation shall have intimate contact with him—Eucharist. “*Tradition is the principle that links one generation with another; it enables them to remain with their parents... Tradition is memory, and memory enriches experience...*”—Congar Jn.14:26...The Holy Spirit will teach us all things and bring to us to God by way of memory...theologically the liturgy is the Church’s memory (3 year cycle) (Cf. CCC, 1099).
 - i. When Paul instructs to keep and hand on the sacred traditions (cf. 1 Cor.11:23) of the faith it comes within the context of a teaching on the Eucharist. The Eucharist is where the tradition dwells. Consult word of the week on **memory**. In the words of Congar: “the Liturgy is the privileged locus of Tradition.”
 - ii. Recall the words of Dei Verbum, that Sacred Tradition are those Divine truths orally transmitted to the apostolic successors under the guidance of the spirit (cf. DV, 7) (cf. CCC, 75-82). (note the conclusion of the Gospel of John), and it is the Magisterium: “Serving and interpreting the written and oral word of God under the guidance of the Pope and bishops” (DV, 10) (CCC, 185).
2. The Magisterium is the continual (breath of Tradition) conversation with the past. It assures the “*faith once delivered to the saints*” bringing more treasures to the Deposit of Faith. The Magisterium has an intimate role with the necessity to understand Divine Revelation: God

revealing Himself through salvation history to His people. The magisterium as the teaching faculty of Tradition is doing nothing more than interpreting the Word of God that the Word of God may live in Tradition.

- a. It transmits all that the Church is and believes. In the words of PBXVI: *“Tradition refers to a certain way of coordinating the living word of the Church and the decisive written word of Scripture...The Bible is lived and interpreted in a way that binds. This interpretation forms a historical continuity, setting fixed standards, but never itself reaching a final point at which it belongs on to the past.”* Scripture does not interpret itself; its inexhaustible meaning is never self-evident. Like all texts, it is need of an interpreting body to bring light to its meaning.

3. The community, born from the proclamation of the Gospel, recognizes that it was called by the words of those who were the first to recognize the Lord and was sent out by him. It knows that it can count on the guidance of the Twelve, as well as those who gradually over time had begun to take on the task of the original Twelve, because of the Holy Spirit. They were absolutely committed to transmitting the “Good News” that they witnessed to in turn proclaim.

- a. This is seen clearly in Paul’s letter to Corinth: “I delivered to you... what I also received” (1 Cor15:3). Paul was following that classical based system of education that was at the root of all education. Tradition, in the Latin *tradere*, means, “to hand on”. In the historical sense, it was a classical system of education in which you preserved a truth. He also writes in his letter to Timothy to “guard the rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us” (2 Tim.1:4). Other verses to consider in light of this.

1. 2 Thes.2:15: “steadfast to the oral tradition which has been taught and handed on to you”. Our faith is pedagogical. Consult word of the week on ***informed***.
2. 1 Tim.6:20... “entrust”: Paratheke (GK.) meaning also deposit. In the historical sense, it was meant for a valuable object placed in the trust with someone for safekeeping (cf. 2 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 2:2)...were handing on more than an object...a person! Doctrine always concerns more than something, rather someone!