

Night VI: February 26, 2010
Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation
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XV. The Authority of Mystery: A review and expanded commentary to already treated subject matter on the hermeneutic of faith. In general, for Pope Benedict XVI, the Church lives under the authority of mystery—in dialogue with the word that revealed God’s saving plan in history, and in obedience service to the Word as is seek final accomplishment of God’s saving plan in the life and age of the Church. It is to understand the Church as mother (consider the analogy of human parent/child relationship)...*key points of reflection here are on Church as **Mother** and her authority over **mystery**.*

- A. The modern crisis of faith is a direct result of a more modern way of interpreting Scripture that focuses exclusively on the historical Jesus without an appreciation into his sonship and spiritual realities (recall previous treatment to Christ’s overarching temptation into Christ’s sonship). A bad biblical hermeneutic gives way to a misguided view into the Church as a whole in her sacraments and Liturgy.
 - a. The historical Jesus ceases to be Christ, the one anointed for the mission to witness to truth. Outside of faith, the Church and her sacramental life suddenly emerge as just not that significant for our salvation.
 - b. Pope Benedict has affirmed the historicity in any good exegesis by making clear that God has revealed himself in human history and the Church and Sacred Scripture are the vehicle to understand the nature of this revelation...recall the genesis of the canon and worship!
 - i. Making note to the literal sense, Pope Benedict has affirmed the central place of understanding the historical, linguistic, and cultural genres to absorb a more appropriate understanding of the text for ourselves. Again, as noted before, you never remove a life from its original habitat and expect to fully understand the identity of that life.
 - ii. For Benedict XVI Sacred Scripture reveals the “structure of faith”, which is the: Promise/Fulfillment...Old Covenant/New Covenant...letter and Spirit...law and grace...Scriptures and Liturgy.
- B. Separation of Church and Scripture. The root of modern biblical criticism is the inability to engage the divine quality of the biblical text. This flows out of the Kantian understanding that we can never “know” anything beyond our sensory perception. Therefore, any good biblical study can only engage the “human element” of the text.
 - a. Kant assumes that history’s uniformity is tied to what can only be explained by natural and human activity. In theory, science can only explain what is relative to what can be seen...*recall Polyani’s **fiduciary principle from the first night**.*

- b. Because of this scientific assumption, biblical exegetes are left to explain away divine intervention and the sense of the supernatural in Sacred Scripture.
- C. The hermeneutic of faith: To study a religious text and not study its religious meaning has failed in its inquiry. Faith itself is a science and is a legitimate source of knowledge and inquiry. Scripture is not a history book, rather a book revealing God's condescension making it salvation history. The Bible reveals that God uses history as a pedagogy in which to teach man about his unfailing love...*recall JPPII and the personal encounter along with the senses.*
 - a. Our understanding of the hermeneutic of faith must also be seen in light of the rise and development of Sacred Scripture in history through the practice of the Church's Liturgy. The early history of the Church reveals an inner unity between the Word, Sacrament, and the Church's authority and order. In other words, there is an organic development in the Church's worship, teaching office, and governance.
 - i. It was by the Apostolic Tradition that the Church initially discerned the canon of the New Testament at the Council of Hippo in 393 to later be ratified at the Council of Carthage in 397. This canon was determined by the books that were officially set forth as those books to be read for public worship.
 - ii. The Bible is ordered to the Mass..."Scriptures are Liturgical documents". The Church was thus seen as the viva vox...the "living voice" of Scripture, expounding and protecting was is rightfully hers by genesis (Zorro).
 - b. Faith seeking Understanding...pg. 114

XVI. The Prodigal Son. *"The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father: the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the Father's house; the extreme misery the son finds himself after squandering his father's fortune; his deep humiliation after finding himself obliged to feed on swine, and still worse, on wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all that he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's welcome; the father's joy—all these are characteristics of the process of conversion. The beautiful ring, the robe, and the festive banquets are symbols of new life—pure, worthy, and joyful—of anyone who returns to God and the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart of Christ who knows the depths of his love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful way"* (CCC, 1439)...cf. word of the week on **Prodigal**.

- A. Consult word of the week on **Parable**.
- B. Allegorically, the parable of the prodigal son narrates the exile and eventual homecoming of the historical Israel. After the reign of King Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms, becoming like two brothers split side by side (Israel-10 tribes) and the south (Judah-2 tribes: Judah and Benjamin). The north went into a far away country Samaria, and lived a life of sin. In the new covenant,

God welcomes home the exiled son (tribes) and lavishes them with mercy and restoration to covenant life (cf. Ez.37:21-23; Hos.11:1-3; Jer.31:18-20).

- a. Ring/best robe: emblem of the Davidic covenant family in which the son is restored to full honor and authority.
- b. Shoes: mark of a free man...only slaves went without shoes
- c. Feast: shalom: full covenant communion/harmony...Konoinia
- d. Brother: The elder brother is like the Pharisee who does not fully understand covenant love/mercy...constantly barking at the perceived injustices.

C. A closer look at the CCC elements to conversion...*Fr. C's reflection...Benedict (JN)*

- a. Merciful Father: Protagonist of the story.
- b. Illusory Freedom: what is always at the center of the downward spiral.
- c. Abandonment: In essence--breaking your father's heart.
- d. Extreme misery and deep humiliation of feeding on the swine: Destination when you fall away from God's grace.
- e. Reflection on reality: The threshold of contemplation.
- f. Repentance and proclamation of guilt before father: A turn towards spiritual poverty where man proclaims to be nothing without God poverty.
- g. The journey back: This attitude of faith becomes the turn back to God.
- h. The father's welcome and joy: Story comes full circle.
 - 1. What is true at the conclusion of this story is the same as the other parables in Lk.15 (lost sheep/lost coin)—joy!...scene from the book "The idiot".