

MESSAGE FROM BEYOND

SCRIPTURE AND FAITH (Nos. 101–184)



SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, you should understand ...

- What the Church means when speaking about Sacred Scripture as being inspired and true.
- The uniquely Catholic approach to reading and understanding Sacred Scripture.
- That faith, the appropriate response to God's revelation, includes a personal surrender of the whole of ourselves to God and to all that he reveals through the Church.

Part 1: Getting our bearings

We found that God is our origin as well as the destination of the journey we have begun. We discovered that the purpose of the journey is to be united to him in beatitude, which means complete and eternal happiness. We also learned that the path of the journey is described in Scripture and Tradition as the working out of God's plan of loving goodness, his plan for our salvation.

In this session, we will continue to examine the plan God has revealed for our ultimate happiness. God's plan is an intricate one, in which he invites us to serve as messengers and signs of his loving goodness. What we will find is that God has prepared every last detail of this plan so that we might come to know his providential care for us.

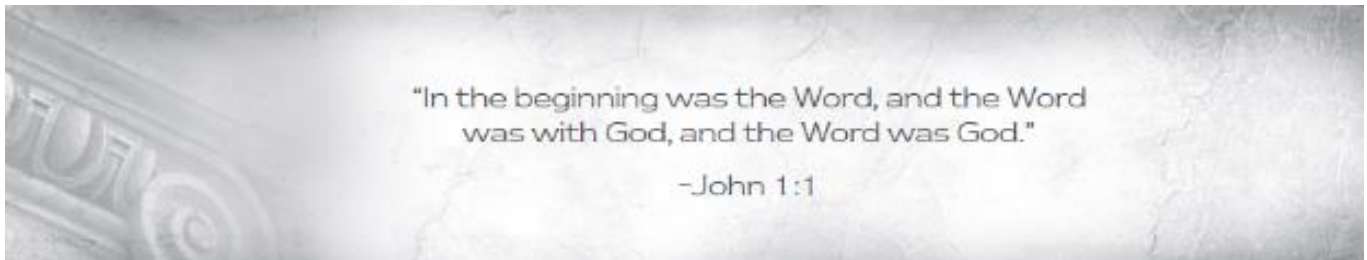
We will see that Holy Scripture is a unique and wonderful set of books that tells this true story of God's plan, a story that reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, the fullness of God's revelation and the center of salvation history. Jesus is himself the perfect Word that expresses the Father's saving love.

That perfect Word, spoken by God in Jesus Christ, calls for a response that we call "faith." As we saw in our first session, faith involves much more than simply saying the Creed ("I believe in God ..." – see No.

26). Just as Jesus is the living Word who fully enters human life, giving himself entirely to us and speaking and acting on our behalf, our response of faith is a complete gift of “... the whole man to God who reveals himself” (No. 176), in accordance with God’s plan.

God’s demonstration of love for us in Jesus inspires in us the desire to give our whole life to him. This in return compels us to focus on the heavenly goal of our life’s journey, to be blessed and united with him in heaven forever. Our response, made possible by God’s supernatural gift of faith, enables us not only to understand but also to enter the true story that God writes, first by making and then by minding the world.

Revelation is that true story that God writes in history; faith is the key, not only to reading it rightly, but also to becoming actors within it.



Part 2: Questions to guide your reading

The presentation for Session Three will cover Catechism Nos. 101–184. If your time is limited, you might want to begin with the essential paragraphs for this session: 101, 104, 106, 107, 109–117, 128, 129, 132, 133, 142–144, 150, 154–160, 163, 166, 168, 170, 173, 176, 181, 184.

Apostolic Tradition and the Bible

The Church discerned which writings were to be included in the Bible’s list, or canon, of sacred books. In the nascent Church following the Resurrection, there was no written New Testament, since the apostles and the evangelists had yet to write the Gospels and the epistles. The Good News was preached and handed on in the same way Jesus presented it—by word of mouth. This “living transmission” of the gospel sheds light on the important role of apostolic Tradition—that is, the preaching of the apostles.

Both Tradition and Scripture have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Over time, the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, decided which books would be considered part of the canon or accepted as inspired Scripture. The Church fathers agreed on the canon of the Bible during the second and third centuries, approving and confirming it at the Councils of Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397. In the same way that the Holy Spirit inspired the Church fathers of those early councils, the Magisterium offers us guidance in understanding and interpreting Scripture today.

Glossary Terms

Allegorical Sense of Scripture

The way certain texts gain significance in the light of Christ. In this case, certain events recalled in the Old Testament become signs (or types) pointing to Christ. (See “The spiritual sense” of Scripture, No. 117).

Anagogical Sense of Scripture

The manner in which the meaning expressed in the text leads one to a better understanding of things eternal, especially in reference to our earthly pilgrimage toward heaven (See No. 117).

Literal Sense of Scripture

“The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis...” (No. 116). The literal sense of Scripture is the foundation of the three spiritual senses: the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical (See No. 116).

Moral Sense of Scripture

The way some texts direct us to lead just lives (See No. 117).

Response of Faith

The complete yes we give to God, made possible by the grace of faith we receive in both the mind and the will at baptism. Faith enables us to believe everything that God has revealed about himself and his plan.

Revelation

God’s way of telling us about himself and his plan for our salvation in Jesus Christ, as we find it in the Church’s oral Tradition and written in the Bible. What we call “public revelation” ended with the death of the last apostle.

Spiritual Senses of Scripture

Three levels of meaning of Scripture, which provide more than the explicit literal meaning. These senses include the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses of Scripture (see No. 117).

Typology

Those persons, places, and events (“types”) in the Old Testament that point forward to the coming of Christ and the Church. These types and their fulfillment help us to see that the Old and New Testaments, and even the Church, are really stages in one continuous story.

Part 3: Presentation Outline

SESSION THREE: MESSAGE FROM BEYOND SCRIPTURE AND FAITH (NOS. 101–184)

I. Review

- A. A “three-legged stool”: Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium
- B. Content of the Catechism comes from divine revelation—Scripture and Tradition
- C. Magisterium, the Church’s “teaching office”:
 - 1. The Magisterium ensures the reliable interpretation of the inspired Scriptures (Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity*)
 - 2. Needed because fallen humanity is prone to ignorance and error

II. Sacred Scripture

- A. “Christ—The Unique Word of Sacred Scripture” (No. 101)
 - 1. In Christ, the Word, God utters himself perfectly in word and deed (see No. 102)
 - a. As the Incarnate Word, Christ is the full revelation of the Father
 - b. Scripture, like Christ, is both divine and human (see Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 37)
 - 2. “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - a. God inspired human authors to write “whatever he wanted written, and no more”¹(No. 106)
 - b. Scriptures are inspired by Holy Spirit, and teach truth without error² (see No. 107)
- B. Principles of Scripture study (see Nos. 109-111)
 - 1. Attend “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture” (Nos. 112)
 - 2. Read “... within ‘the living Tradition of the whole Church .’” (No. 113)

3. “Be attentive to the analogy of faith .” (No. 114)

C. Interpretation of Scripture

1. All Scripture is one book, pointing to Christ (see No. 134, 122)

- a. Typology: Old Testament “types,” or prefigurations of Christ, anticipate his redemptive work (see No. 128)
- b. The “New Testament is hidden in the Old; the Old Testament is revealed in the New”(No. 129)

2. The “senses” of Scripture (see No. 115–119)

- a. Literal sense—historical meaning of the text (that is, the meaning expressed by the words themselves). “All other senses ... are based on the literal.” (No. 116)
- b. Spiritual sense (see No. 117)
 - i. Allegorical—the text’s significance in Christ; oriented to past by faith
 - ii. Moral—text’s significance to our lives of faith; oriented to present in charity
 - iii. Anagogical (anagoge–Greek “leading”)—the text’s significance with regard to eternal things; oriented to future in hope

III. “Man’s Response to God”

A. God reveals his love; our “adequate response” is faith (No. 142)

B. With his whole being, man gives the “obedience of faith”⁵ (No. 143)

C. Faith “... involves an assent of the intellect and will ...” (No. 176)

D. “Faith is a foretaste ...” of the blessing in heaven⁶ (No. 184)

E. Faith is always within the context of the Church

1. Faith is personal (“I believe,” see No. 167)

2. Faith is also ecclesial (“We believe,” see No. 168)

Questions

From the Catechism Nos. 101–141:1.

1. Why does God speak to us in human words?
2. What three criteria does the Second Vatican Council set forth for the proper interpretation of Scripture?
3. What are the four senses of Scripture?
4. What does the Catechism say should be the “soul of sacred theology”?
5. “All of Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is .”

From the Catechism Nos. 142–197:

6. Obedience comes from the Latin *ob audire*, which means:
7. Who is the “most perfect embodiment” of obedient faith? (Hint: This person’s name doesn’t begin with an A.)
8. In faith, what two human faculties “cooperate with divine grace”?
9. Why is faith more certain than all human knowledge?
10. T or F Occasionally, there may be real discrepancies between faith and reason.

Part 4: Group Discussion Questions

1. “[T]he Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body”¹ (No. 103). What does that mean? How do you see the Church live this out in the Mass?

2. God established the Magisterium of the church to guide us in the appropriate interpretation of Scripture. Do you see any advantages to this arrangement?

3. The Catechism describes the “canon of Scripture” in Nos. 120–130. What role does the Old Testament play in our lives as Christians? Describe the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

4. Faith impacts our intellect and will (see No. 155). Can you identify a situation in which you learned something intellectually that inspired you to change your actions or the way you live?

5. “The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others” (No. 166). Describe a time when you had the opportunity to be a witness of faith to others. Can you identify a situation in which you needed to lean on someone else who had the gift of faith?