

Being Catholic Today

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First Lecture: The Heart of the Matter

What is required of Christians is, first and foremost, a solid grounding in their faith. On this sound base, they can build a life which responds positively to the invitation in the First Letter of St. Peter: ‘Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and a clear conscience’ (1 Pt 3:15f). (Pontifical Councils for Culture and for Inter-religious Dialogue: *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life* 2003).

I. Encounter with Christ

“Come and see a man who told me everything I’ve ever done.” (John 4:29)

“Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.” (John 1:49)

The life I now live in the flesh I live in faith in the Son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake. (Gal 2:20)

II. Incarnation & Redemption

Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil. (Acts 10:38)

No one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt 11:27)

I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again. (John 10:17-18)

“He has done all things well.” (Mark 7:37)

“No man ever spoke like this man.” (John 7:46)

In our own time, the last days, God has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is. He is the radiant light of God’s glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. (Heb 1:2-3)

In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-2, 14)

In his body dwells the fullness of divinity. (Col 2:9)

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. (2 Cor 5:19)

...Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father, through whom all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. (Nicene Creed)

The tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son," he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:35-39)

There is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as a ransom for them all. (1 Tim 2:5-6)

III. Faith

...all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and every tongue acclaim **Jesus Christ is Lord** to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:11)

No one can say, "**Jesus is Lord**" unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)

If your lips confess that **Jesus is Lord** and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. (Rom 10:9)

Faith is a readiness to receive the love of God as a gift. (von Balthasar)

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And they left their nets at once and followed him. (Matt 4:18-20)

And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin glad to have had the honor of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name. (Acts 5:41)

IV. Baptism

He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptized. That very day about three thousand were added to their number. (Acts 2:41)

When they believed Philip's preaching of the Good News about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12)

One of these women was called Lydia.... She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying. After she and her household had been baptized, she sent us an invitation: "If you really think me a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay with us." (Acts 16:14-15)

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They told him, "Become a believer in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, and your household too." Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his family. Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was baptized then and there with all his household. (Acts 16:30-33)

A great many Corinthians who had heard him became believers and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

You have been buried with him when you were baptized; and by baptism, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead. (Col 2:12)

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ. (Gal 3:26-27)

V. Church

God has made him...the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation. (Eph 1:22-23)

May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. (John 17:21)

The whole group of believers had one heart and one soul. (Acts 4:32)

Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time. (Matt 28:20)

He who hears you, hears me. (Luke 10:16)

Accept the strength, my dear son, that comes from the grace of Christ Jesus. You have heard everything that I teach in public; hand it on to reliable people so that they in turn will be able to teach others. (2 Tim 2:1-2)

Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the dead, I put this duty to you, in the name of his Appearing and of his kingdom: proclaim the

message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience—but do all with patience and the the intention of teaching. (2 Tim 4:1-2)

The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to get everything organized there and appoint elders in every town in the way that I told you...each of them must have a firm grasp of the unchanging message of the tradition, so that he can be counted on for both expounding the sound doctrine and refuting those who argue against it. (Titus 1:5, 9)

I want you to be quite uncompromising in teaching all this so that those who now believe in God may keep their minds constantly occupied in doing good works...If a man disputes what you teach, then after a first and a second warning, have no more to do with him. (Titus 3:8, 10)

Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the overseers, to feed the Church of God which he bought with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

Then he took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which will be given for you; do this as a memorial of me.’ (Luke 22:19)

Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. (Eph 4:3)

Christ has drawn sin to himself, made it his lot and so revealed what true ‘holiness’ is: not separation but union, not judgment but redeeming love. Is the Church not simply the continuation of God’s deliberate plunge into human wretchedness; is it not simply the continuation of Jesus’ habit of sitting at table with sinners, of his mingling with the misery of sin to the point where he actually seems to sink under its weight? Is there not revealed in the unholy holiness of the Church, as opposed to man’s expectation of purity, God’s true holiness, which is love, love which does not keep its distance in a sort of aristocratic, untouchable purity but mixes with the dirt of the world, in order thus to overcome it? Can therefore the holiness of the church be anything else but the mutual support which comes, of course, from the fact that all of us are supported by Christ? (Josef Ratzinger: *Introduction to Christianity*)

VI. Repentance

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim 1:15)

She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sin. (Matt 1:21)

Seeing Jesus coming toward him, John said, “Look, there is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt 26:28)

“What must we do, brothers?” “You must repent,” Peter answered, “and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:37-38)

The time has come and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel. (Mark 1:15)

“This was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer. Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.” (Acts 3:19)

It is not the healthy who need the doctor but the sick; I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:31-32)

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees saying, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8)

Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 18:3-4)

The tax collector standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified.... (Luke 18:13-14)

Faith is the act of leaning on the toughness or sturdiness of God (André Louf).

It is when I am weak that I am strong. (2 Cor 12:10)

I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. (Luke 22:32)

VII. Love

Forgive each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ. (Eph 4:32)

I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love. (Luke 7:47)

By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

If we live by the truth and in love we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love. (Eph 4:15-16)