

Scripture32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

2Mac. 7:1-2, 9-14; 2Thes. 2:16-3:5; Luke 20:27-38

It's quite obvious that the Sadducees are attempting to make a complete mockery of Jesus. They are asking Him to teach how multiple marriages will fare in the resurrected state even though the Sadducees have no belief in a resurrection. As Christians, we are able to look beyond the horizons of earthly existence and know perfection is waiting for us even though the meaning of perfection in an eternal state is indecipherable: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard: neither has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). What Jesus makes clear, though, is that conjugal love will not exist in the resurrected life. In heaven we will find out and perhaps be downright shocked by how limited and conditional is the love we offer in this world. Married love, creating a new family, love for our children and love for parents is just about the fullest extent of love that human beings can currently comprehend. Does anyone really understand the kind of love that would make Love Himself die to save all of humanity—past, present and future? In the sacred bond of married life, considering the elimination of conjugal love in the afterlife right now might seem disappointing because we don't understand how unflawed and beautiful Love is in heaven which is also coupled with an equal inexplicability of how limited the love is we currently share. Our faith and our hope can imaginatively transport us to something better but our imaginations cannot conjure up the infinite reality of God's Love. In heaven, our royal priesthood will be exercised in unmarred proficiency as we offer worship, praise and adoration to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for all eternity. In John's Gospel Jesus says: "The Father and I are One" (John 10:30). It is this transforming union of God and humanity that so few experience in the here and now but most assuredly all who love God will experience in the hereafter.

Saints Speak

You ask how the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine . . . the Blood of Christ. I shall tell you: the Holy Spirit comes upon them and accomplishes what surpasses every word and thought. . . . Let it be enough for you to understand that it is by the Holy Spirit, just as it was of the Holy Virgin and by the Holy Spirit that the Lord, through and in himself, took flesh.

St. John Damascene

Life extends over all beings and fills them with unlimited light; the Orient of orients pervades the universe, and he who was "before the daystar" and before the heavenly bodies, immortal and vast, the great Christ, shines over all beings more brightly than the sun. Therefore a day of long, eternal light is ushered in for us who believe in him, a day which is never blotted out: the mystical Passover.

St. Hippolytus

How I wept, deeply moved by your hymns, songs, and the voices that echoed through your Church! What emotion I experienced in them! Those sounds flowed into my ears, distilling the truth in my heart. A feeling of devotion surged within me, and tears streamed down my face—tears that did me good.

St Augustine



From the Catechism...

1076 The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit ushers in a new era in the "dispensation of the mystery"—the age of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, "until he comes." In this age of the Church Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments in what the common Tradition of the East and the West calls "the sacramental economy"; this is the communication (or "dispensation") of the fruits of Christ's Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church's "sacramental" liturgy.

1103 *Anamnesis.* The liturgical celebration always refers to God's saving interventions in history. "The economy of Revelation is realized by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other. . . . [T]he words for their part proclaim the works and bring to light the mystery they contain." In the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit "recalls" to the assembly all that Christ has done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the churches, the celebration "makes a remembrance" of the marvelous works of God in an anamnesis which may be more or less developed. The Holy Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (*doxology*).

1150 *Signs of the covenant.* The Chosen People received from God distinctive signs and symbols that marked its liturgical life. These are no longer solely celebrations of cosmic cycles and social gestures, but signs of the covenant, symbols of God's mighty deeds for his people. Among these liturgical signs from the Old Covenant are circumcision, anointing and consecration of kings and priests, laying on of hands, sacrifices, and above all the Passover. The Church sees in these signs a prefiguring of the sacraments of the New Covenant.

1151 *Signs taken up by Christ.* In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. He performs healings and illustrates his preaching with physical signs or symbolic gestures. He gives new meaning to the deeds and signs of the Old Covenant, above all to the Exodus and the Passover, for he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

1152 *Sacramental signs.* Since Pentecost, it is through the sacramental signs of his Church that the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification. The sacraments of the Church do not abolish but purify and integrate all the richness of the signs and symbols of the cosmos and of social life. Further, they fulfill the types and figures of the Old Covenant, signify and make actively present the salvation wrought by Christ, and prefigure and anticipate the glory of heaven.

Words and Actions

1153 A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God's children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. Admittedly, the symbolic actions are already a language, but the Word of God and the response of faith have to accompany and give life to them, so that the seed of the Kingdom can bear its fruit in good soil. The liturgical actions signify what the Word of God expresses: both his free initiative and his people's response of faith.

1154 The *liturgy of the Word* is an integral part of sacramental celebrations. To nourish the faith of believers, the signs which accompany the Word of God should be emphasized: the book of the Word (a lectionary or a book of



the Gospels), its veneration (procession, incense, candles), the place of its proclamation (lectern or ambo), its audible and intelligible reading, the minister's homily which extends its proclamation, and the responses of the assembly (acclamations, meditation psalms, litanies, and profession of faith).

1155 The liturgical word and action are inseparable both insofar as they are signs and instruction and insofar as they accomplish what they signify. When the Holy Spirit awakens faith, he not only gives an understanding of the Word of God, but through the sacraments also makes present the "wonders" of God which it proclaims. The Spirit makes present and communicates the Father's work, fulfilled by the beloved Son.

Word Wise

Sacrament

Sacraments are outward signs which have the effect of conferring God's self-communicating grace. The Catholic Church teaches that they were instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church as effective signs by which God sanctifies and unifies his people. The sacraments are not merely signs, but they are *effective* signs, announcing God's active power and love and God's desire to confer a particular help and presence based on the way God communicated to people through his Son. There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Penance or Reconciliation, Eucharist or Communion, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Anointing of the Sick.

Grace

God's self-communication that enables us to share in the relationship of love between the three persons in the Trinity, to share in God's perfect love. Grace is the favor of the Lord; it is a gift. Grace is the healing power of the Lord, enabling us, despite our failings, to love as Christ did. Grace is also healing in that, through Grace, our sins are forgiven by God.

Sacramental

Signs that are *reminders* of God's presence in our lives. We might use a picture, a rosary, a statue, a medal, water, oil, clothing, a candle, or a cross in this way, to name but a few examples. Sacramentals are aids to maintaining mindfulness of God's presence and should *not* be confused with the sacraments, although the liturgical rites in which the Sacraments are celebrated make extensive use of sacramentals.

Mystery

In the context of Catholic doctrine, something incomprehensible. A mystery is something not only unknown which confounds the human mind, but ultimately a thing unknowable, and therefore a subject of faith. Mystery was also used in reference to the rites of the Easter Vigil, and the sacraments generally, as acts which integrate the faithful community into God's plan for the salvation of the world. Through God's promise, mysteries are in the process of being revealed as we move closer to the institution of the Kingdom of God.

Mediator

A person, or something, that acts as a liaison or bridge between the holy God and human beings. Catholics believe that the Church (meaning the witnessing community), the priest, the sacraments, and that each one of us can be a mediator of God's grace. Christ is the principal mediator between God the Father and humankind, and His work is continued through the Holy Spirit.



Use the following space to list questions or thoughts from reflecting on the material in these Companion Notes that you would like to share when the group meets again.

Remember to read the scripture readings for our next session, the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C and do the journal keeping on p.178 of the Catechumen's Companion.