

St John Paul II Seminar Group  
Semester 1 2016

Notes on the First Session (September 1, 2016)

I write to you all, especially those who could not attend the first session of the seminar, to apologize because the audio app on my computer failed to record. I clicked “record” then switched to my Bible app and the audio for some reason switched to pause. I should have checked but I didn’t. I am very sorry.

We had a very robust session. We discussed the Trinity and the importance that metaphysics plays in understanding our faith. This took us, of course, on a related line of discussion on Original Sin and the Loss of Grace. We were five in attendance and read and discussed through numbered paragraph 7 of the document (Part 1, Section 1.)

Following the text of Section 1, Jesus’ Promise and Revelation at the Last Supper we discussed the progression (rather than redundancy) of the five verses from the Gospel of John that St John Paul refers to and I added verses from the Book of Acts:

(1) John 14:12-17 - whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.

And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth.

(2) John 14:26 - The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name--he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.

(3) John 15:26-27 - When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

(4) John 16:12-13 - I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.

But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming.

We will pick it up again on Thursday the 15th with paragraph 8 to begin Part 1, Section 2 “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

(5) John 16:14-15 - He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.

[6] Acts 1:1-3 - In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

As I said, we can see this as a progression where as it could easily be seen as a redundant announcement of the coming of the Holy Spirit (The Advocate, Spirit of Truth.)

John Paul points out the progression as such:

(1) [In sending the Holy Spirit] He will be “another advocate/counsellor.” A second advocate with Jesus being the first.

(2) He will “teach” and “bring to remembrance” what Jesus had taught

(3) He will bear witness to Jesus, “and you also . . . because you have been with me from the beginning.”

(4) He will lead you [the Church] to all truth

(5) He will take from what is mine and declare it to you. [Jesus clarifies by saying that what is His is from the Father, showing that the source of truth is the Father, to the Son, taken up by the Holy Spirit and declared to the Church.]

I added the first three verses from the Book of Acts to show that “all that Jesus did and taught” was brought to a new and different understanding by the Apostles in the light of the Resurrection as Jesus spoke to them “about the Kingdom of God” during the forty days before the Ascension and Pentecost. In these verses the reader must consider that for three years Jesus had been talking to them “about the Kingdom of God,” but now, St Luke tells us, Jesus spend those forty days talking about what they should have already known. It may have been the same topic, but witnessing that Jesus had suffered and died, then became physically present to them alive again, all that He had done and taught had new meaning to them. That the Kingdom of God was all about Salvation and Eternal Life.

In all these passages, John Paul points out, in paragraph 5, “the Apostles will be in a special way associated with the Holy Spirit.” We know that the Holy Spirit came upon the whole Church at Pentecost and each one of us receive the Holy Spirit into our soul at Baptism, but the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, receive the Holy Spirit in a “special association.” This is known as the Sacerdotal Endowment received in priestly ordination and brought to a fuller manifestation in the Consecration (ordination) of the Bishops. This “special association” gives the bishop his primary office as teacher.

Through the Spirit of Truth, leading the Church to “all truth,” this special association leads to our understanding of the infallibility of the Pope and the College of Bishops in union with the Pope; i.e. the Magisterium.

As I said, in Baptism we each receive the Holy Spirit and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit including the Gift of Counsel. It is a gift wherein the Holy Spirit, as we grow in Him to be attuned to His counsel, guides us in discernment and reflection on our own life and vocation. It is through the Bishops, successors to the Apostles, in a “special association” to the Holy Spirit, however, that the Church leads and teaches in matters of Faith and Morals.

A final note on the text and a good example of how John Paul leads us along theological lines building on things previously said. Citing a 6th verse from the Gospel of John (16:7) “I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.” In the last sentence of Section 1. (paragraph 7) John Paul says of this verse “It will be necessary to return to these words in a separate reflection.

I must admit that this verse (along with Hebrews 6:4-6) has been the most difficult to explain or even understand.) In what John Paul calls “a separate reflection,” however, this verse (John 16:7) becomes clear in an “ahah moment.” Easily over looked or glossed over in Section 1, John Paul mentions the “departure of Jesus” (paragraph 3 “When the time for Jesus to leave this world . . .” and “preparing the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room for his departure;” and also in paragraph 6 “Christ’s self-emptying through his Passion and Death on the Cross, which, . . . was about to happen.)

These references to Jesus “departure” is John Paul’s way of leading us, preparing us, to understand that if Jesus does not go, the Holy Spirit cannot come. In paragraph 8 (which we did not have time to read in full) John Paul explains (in the second grammatical paragraph) the “relationship of interdependence which could be called causal between the manifestation of each: “If I go, I will send him to you.” [And subsequently, “if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you.”] John Paul goes on to say, “The Holy Spirit will come insofar as Christ will depart through the Cross: he will come not only afterwards, but because of the Redemption accomplished by Christ [from the Cross,] through the will of the Father.” In other words, the Holy Spirit could not come, and more specifically, He could not come to us in Baptism, unless and until we (our souls) were redeemed.

This last revelation from John Paul’s teaching text, is in direct context of the metaphysics we began the evening with. To wit, with Original Sin, Adam caused the loss of Sanctifying Grace originally infused in Human Nature by God. As we see in the opening Prologue of the Gospel of John, it is through Christ that the restoration of Sanctifying Grace was accomplished:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, . . . and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. To those who believe in his name, he gave power to become children of God. We saw his glory, as the Father’s only Son, [and] he was full of grace and truth. Through his fullness we have received grace in place of grace.”  
(John 1:1, 14a, 12, 14b, 16)

The “power to become children of God” is instituted in the Sacrament of Baptism (cf. Matt 28:19) and through Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan, which sanctified Human Nature, preparing it so that each soul (each an instantiation of human nature) could receive Sanctifying Grace and the Holy Spirit in individual Baptism. This restoration of Sanctifying Grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is only made possible by the Redemption of mankind brought about by Jesus’ Passion and Death on the Cross.

I hope these notes have helped capture the discussion of the first session of our group. If you have any questions, of course as always, please contact me.

For our next session the reading assignment is to continue into Section 2 (paragraph 8) and read through Section 3 ending with paragraph 14.

I will begin referring to the numbered paragraphs with the initials of the document (DV) and the paragraph number ( DV.8 through DV.14) As I said previously, these numbers are continuous throughout the document, whereas the Section numbers start over with subsequent Parts (e.g. Part II, Section 1, vs. Part I, Section 1.)

Yours Truly, in the Light of Christ,  
Dcn. Peter