From last week’s DVD: Matthew 5-8 – Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount

The 10 Commandments were external strictures for the Israelites in the desert who needed specific rules. Jesus reaffirmed the commandments but fleshed out the laws to include and respect the internal dynamism and the true freedom we have. True freedom is the ability to participate with God in a good and virtuous act.

The Beatitudes lead to true happiness, not earthly happiness which is equated to pleasure. (In our society, we have distorted the idea of happiness.) True happiness is joy. True joy comes from gospel living, from true Christian living. God gave us free will meaning we don’t have to follow God’s laws because God says so. We follow God’s laws because it leads us to true happiness and joy both here and in Heaven.

Happiness, joy, is dependent upon giving – a true gift of self – not taking.

Pope Francis knows that the way for people to become truly happy is by living the way Christ lived. He knows that we live in a wounded society full of people that may or may not have been exposed to the real Jesus Christ. The worst thing we can do is to judge people because of their sins. Instead, we must embrace them and bring Christ to them. We want to let all people know, no matter what they have done, that God loves them unconditionally.

In fact, this unconditional love is what the parable of the prodigal son is all about. Jesus often used parables to illustrate complex theological concepts in terms anyone can understand. In this one, God welcomes this ungrateful, profligate back with open arms and restores him back to the exact status he had before he committed all those horrible sins. That’s what God does for us. And THAT is how we are to approach a sinner – with open arms and mercy. And once they understand that God loves him or her unconditionally, then we can explain why the Church teaches a specific teaching.

When we apply strict rules and strictures, we live in fear. That’s not what Pope Francis wants us to share. He wants us to share love. That’s the point of the New Evangelization, too. We need to catechize ourselves to our own faith and then we can spread the word and clear up misconceptions about what we really believe. (For a more detailed explanation of the New Evangelization, see the parish website, www.sacredheartwinchester.org.)
Kerygma – proclamation

The letters of St. Paul were the first books of the Bible to be written. The gospel means “Good News” that Jesus was risen and is Lord. The books to which we refer – the Gospels – didn’t exist yet.

The deposit of faith: Tradition and Scripture. Everything we have come to know and believe about the Catholic faith.

Gospel: The “good news” of God’s mercy and love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is this Gospel or good news that the Apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the entire world.

Jesus commissioned the Apostles to proclaim the Good News of Salvation:
Matthew 28:16-20: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Sacred Tradition: Christ commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations. Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 81).
Graced by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles did what Jesus commanded them. They did this orally, in writing, by the heroic sanctity of their lives, and by ensuring that there would be successors for this mission. The first communication of the Gospel was by preaching and witness.

The Gospel writers were called evangelists: The Good News was handed on orally (the kerygma or initial proclamation) - “Did you hear that Jesus Christ is the messiah, he died and was Resurrected in Jerusalem?” (There were hundreds of witnesses to the risen Christ. But Christ appointed 12 Apostles specifically.) The Apostles established institutions specifically to hand on the Good News. They receive the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and are completely transformed and leave the room to proclaim the Gospel message under the inspiration of the Spirit.

In order for the full and living Gospel to be handed down through the generations, the Apostles appointed bishops to carry on after them - a Living Transmission from person to person, from Apostle to Bishop, accomplished through the Holy Spirit, is distinct from Sacred Scripture.
Magisterium: The teaching office of the Church. The Apostles chose men to be bishops to succeed them and handed on to them “what they received from Jesus’ teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit.” The pope and bishops in union with him are successors of the Apostles and inherit the responsibility of authoritative teaching from them.

Sensus Fidei – When something is believed from the Pope and bishops to the last of the faithful, it is infallible, true, such as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or the Real Presence of the Eucharist. By faithful, it is meant those who are faithful believers, not just those who call themselves Catholics. Another way of understanding this truth is the principle that the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the Church, draws the whole body of the faithful to believe what truly belongs to the faith.

Tradition: The living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church. The oral preaching of the Apostles and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Bible) are conserved and handed on as the Deposit of Faith through the Apostolic Succession in the Church. The oral teaching of Jesus Christ was handed down to his Apostles and their disciples before there was a written New Testament.


9. Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.

11. Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (cf. John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–20, 3:15–16), holds that the books of both the Old and New
Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.

Deposit of Faith: The fullness of revelation handed down through Sacred Scripture and Tradition, entrusted to the Church for its authoritative interpretation.

Dogma: a truth of the faith that must be adhered to by the Christian people. E.g., the Holy Trinity, Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist, Christ’s divinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Conception, perpetual virginity and assumption into Heaven, etc.

The Church accepts and venerates the Bible as inspired. The 46 books in the Old Testament and the 27 New Testament books were approved as we know them today during the Council of Trent in 1546, though the canon (official list) of Sacred Scripture was accepted long before that. It was only made official in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Sacred Scripture is inspired by God and is the Word of God. Therefore, God is the author of Sacred Scripture. The Catholic religion is not just a religion of the book. It is a religion of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the interpreter of Sacred Scripture.

Gospels: The four books hold a special place of honor because they are about the life and salvific mission of Jesus. Matthew was probably an apostle, John was certainly an apostle. Both Mark (probably John Mark) and Luke (had a special relationship with Mary because we learn most about Mary from Luke) were the beneficiaries of the oral tradition of stories about Jesus and his teachings. God ensured that the human authors wrote/taught without error. God used the talent of the author in whatever timeframe that person lived, with whatever talents those authors possessed, to write those things that were necessary for salvation.

Read Scripture in the context of the entire Bible.


When interpreting Scripture, we should be attentive to what God wanted to reveal through the authors for our salvation. We have to be attentive to the literary form and the mode of communication that were then current when the piece was written. The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis (the process scholars use to determine the meaning of the text) following rules of sound interpretation. Exegesis - to pull meaning out of

We want to avoid eisegesis – putting meaning into the text. The most authoritative
interpretation of the Bible lies with the Magisterium – the Pope and the teaching of the Church.

The literal sense of the Bible – is the type of literary form: poetry, history, hymns, wisdom sayings, parable, other forms of figurative language.

The spiritual sense of the Bible – is derived from the unity of God’s plan of salvation.

Allegorical sense – we try to understand the significance by how it relates to Christ

Moral Sense – The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. They were written for our instruction, according to St. Paul.

Anagogical Sense – We can view the realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland, thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.

There is one Gospel, but four versions

Luke wrote for the gentiles

Matthew wrote for the Jews to prove that Jesus was the Messiah

Mark wrote for the early Christians of Rome (we think this was the first Gospel and may have been written from Peter's perspective with Peter as a source)

John wrote for the whole world (John's gospel was the last one written.

They are our principle source of knowledge about Jesus. They tell of the life and teaching of Jesus.

We look at the unity of the divine plan through typology in the light of Christ's coming.

Many of the Old Testament prophets prefigured the coming/existence of Christ. The New Testament has to be read in light of the Old Testament - it is hidden in the Old Testament.

Matthew, Mark, Luke - synoptic gospels (synoptic - one eye) - they tell essentially the same stories

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” St. Jerome

We want to avoid Bible literalism – solo Scriptura – a strict literal interpretation of the Bible. In every Biblical interpretation, there are elements of the truth. It is important to understand the literary forms and the context, etc., when interpreting Scripture.

We also want to avoid reductionism because it reduces all Scripture to the natural order and eliminates the reality of divine intervention.

The denial of a supernatural order

The denial of God’s intervention in the world through revelation

The denial of the possibility and existence of miracles

The incompatibility of faith with historical truth

An almost a priori denial of the historical value of the nature of the documents of revelation.
In the late 16th century, seven books of the Old Testament were removed by Martin Luther. They are called the Deuterocanonical books:

- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom
- Sirach
- Baruch
- 1 & 2 Maccabees
- as well as 7 chapters of Esther and 2 chapters of Daniel

Septuagint - There was a rumor that in 150 BC, 72 men went into a room to translate Hebrew Scriptures into Greek - this is the Catholic Old Testament. This is the Old Testament that Jesus used. The Torah was the first five books of the OT (the books of Moses).

In 70 AD, Jerusalem fell and the Temple fell. In 90 AD, in Jamnia for the Council of Jamnia, the Jews decided to eliminate from the Septuagint. It was a reaction to the destruction of the Temple and the occupation of Jerusalem.

Martin Luther agreed with the Council of Jamnia and rejects those books because of the scriptural evidence contained in those books for doctrine with which Martin Luther didn't agree. For example, 2nd Maccabees where we find the scriptural evidence for the doctrine of Purgatory.

Protestant Bibles generally do not include the Deuterocanonical books. They will refer to these books as the Apocryphal. We refer to the ancient texts that did not meet the Church's test for inspiration as Apocryphal books. They have historical value but not necessarily inspired truths.

Catholic commentaries:
- Navarre Bible Commentaries
- Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
- Ignatius Study Bible

Chapter 4: Bring about the Obedience of Faith

The grace to believe in God initially is a gift in itself. Our response is a personal act. Both this gift of God and our response to his Revelation are called faith. By faith, we are able to give our minds (intellects) and hearts (wills) to God to trust in his will, and to follow the direction he gives us.

Faith is both a personal and communal relationship. It is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed. A personal faith says, “I believe in God.” This is an act of belief in
the one, true, and living God. But it is not just a private act. In the assembly of believers at Mass, we profess our faith together and join our hearts as we experience ourselves as the Body of Christ. Our personal faith brings us into a relationship with God’s people and the faith of the entire people strengthens us in our relationship with God.

Faith wants to understand what the Church teaches. Faith as a grace or gift from God makes it possible to gain some understanding of all that he has revealed to us, including the totality of his plan as well as the many mysteries of faith. Growth in understanding God’s revelation is a lifelong process.

Faith is necessary for salvation. It is a gift of grace. God not only speaks to us, he also gives us the grace to respond. Faith is a free, human act. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to make a decision to respond to divine Revelation, and to follow through in living out our response.

Faith believes with conviction in the message found in Scripture and Tradition and is transmitted to us through many means such as liturgical prayers and the Creeds.

Life is a struggle, a lifelong pilgrimage to our home in Heaven. No one can avoid the Cross. The road is tough. Our faith helps to guide us along the way.

Christ has suffered all of what we will experience before us. He understands and is there for us.

Our ultimate goal is to be united with God in the beatific vision for all eternity in perfect happiness.

The Community of Saints: The believers on Earth, the believers in Purgatory, and the believers in Heaven. We join our prayers together in unity to help each other.

Hebrews 11: You can read all about the Faith of the Ancients for inspiration.

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is a human act – a free assent. It is right and just to entrust ourselves wholly in God because what he says is true and just.

To be human, “man’s response to God by faith must be free, and... therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act.”\textsuperscript{39} “God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced.... This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus.”\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. “For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke
against it. His kingdom... grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself.” CCC #160

Faith is a grace, a gift. It is a gift from God, a supernatural virtue infused by God. Believing is possible only through God. Faith requires our 100% cooperation. Our heart and our will choose to believe. We believe in the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

“Faith seeks understanding”: it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens “the eyes of your hearts” to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God’s plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery. “The same Holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.” In the words of St. Augustine, “I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.”

Faith and science: “Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.” CCC #159

Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation. “Since ‘without faith it is impossible to please [God]’ and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life ’but he who endures to the end.’” CCC #161

Faith is necessary for salvation.

The Church is the oldest institution in the world. If it were not a divine institution, it would not have survived to this day.

Symbolon: When a mission or important task was established, it was authenticated with a seal. The seal would be divided into two and given to two people. When brought together, the two people would be authenticated and they could proceed with the mission or task. The two Creeds – Nicene and Apostle’s Creeds - represent the authentic faith, the beliefs
we hold as Catholics. The Nicene Creed is fuller and is the one we say at Mass. They both express the truths we believe as Catholics.
The doctrine of extra ecclesia nulla salus – outside of the Church no one is saved – is no longer taught.

God wants all of us to go to Heaven but he respects our free will to such an extent that he will not force assent on us.

We cannot err in our belief if we believe what God has handed down to us.

Reject the tyranny of relativism: Relativism says “what is true for you may not be true for me.” There is but one truth and one reality. Jesus told us what is true. God is Truth – one truth. There is one objective standard and it is not a personal standard.