

Continuity: from the Scriptures through Vatican II, a Walk on an Ancient Path
Wednesday, September 9, 2015 9:30 AM Morning Enrichment What Makes Us Catholic? COR Center

In that subtitle, what we are talking about is a fluid issue. **What does it mean to be Catholic? In one way, it's always the same; in another way, it constantly changes.** As Sister mentioned, fifty years ago Vatican II concluded. **Vatican II was a watershed**, but we have to keep in mind what its whole point was. It was to renew the Church and to reintroduce ancient traditions. So, for example, the liturgy as we have it now is closer to the fourth century than the fifteenth. But in 1960 it was closer to the fifteenth. So in one way, Vatican II was a conserving council because **it's going back to tradition.**

The whole period from 1900 to 1962, when the council began, back to the twenties and teens, was a period when the theologians of the Church were going through what was called *nouvelle theologie*, new theology, which is part of a movement called *ressourcement*, resourcing, *resourcing*, going back **to the original sources of Christian, Catholic tradition.** And the main point I want to make right away is it was surprising what they learned. Many people went into this *ressourcement* looking up the Fathers thinking it would revalidate what the Church was doing at that time, and it didn't. **So what theologians and historians discovered was that things have not always been as they were in 1910 or 1920 or 1940. Things were different in an earlier time.** And so with this idea of opening up the Church to greater possibilities, **sometimes returning to earlier traditions, sometimes not, sometimes going on from where we are now into something as yet unexplored, that is our life in the Church.**

Some people are uncomfortable with this. It's because of our own personalities or temperaments, the way we were born or the way we are put together. Some people favor security; other people favor adventure. So **we mustn't get involved in arguments that are based upon our temperamental differences. We have to simply be open-minded and study what is and try to find a place where we can be Christlike in the Church.**

Now the word "Catholic" comes from *katholikos*. *katholikos* in Greek means "**universal.**" People say, well, that means the Church is everywhere in the world. No, that's not what it means. What it refers to is **a fundamental connection among various churches**, each one which was part of the *katholika* so that there is a reflection, so that every individual local church reflects the same faith in another local church. As opposed to what? As opposed to isolated ideas or beliefs. **An isolated idea or belief is called a heresy.** The original idea of a heresy was a sect. The word "heresy" and "sect" is actually the same word in Greek. So the original idea of heresy is, well, this is believed only in Naperville; nowhere else believes this. So the idea of the *Katholika* is we don't want to have just the belief of Naperville. We don't want to have just the belief of Jerusalem. **We want the belief that corresponds to what the Christians in Rome and Constantinople and Alexandria and Antioch and Naperville all believe together. So that's the idea of the Catholic faith.**

The way the Catholic faith started to be annunciated was by the **bishops** who were the leaders of the Church, and who made it their business to **communicate with other leaders**. So this building up of the *Katholica* is something that happened very gradually.

Now if we want to ask ourselves: Well, **what are the fundamental beliefs of the Catholic Church that have always been shared?** Well, we have no more esteemed authority on that topic than **St. Thomas Aquinas**, and, oddly, he says there are only **two fundamental beliefs in the Catholic Faith**. Now that's amazing because if you look at the creeds, there are all kinds of affirmations. Each one is an article of faith. "Article," that is the same as the word for a member of your body. A finger is an article; a hand is an article. So those are different parts, but they are not essential beliefs. St. Thomas says only two.

The first is the idea or the belief, the teaching, of **the Incarnation of the Word of God**. The Word becomes flesh. You are familiar with the concept, but it is the distinguishing characteristic of Catholic faith. Now we find the belief *is* stated in, of course, the Scriptures. And what it means has never been completely unpacked. So **we are growing in our understanding of the Incarnation of Christ**. But the fact of the matter is it means that **God became human**. How we can understand this, God entered into the world of the flesh **and created solidarity**. That's an important word. Solidarity with the creation itself. And this movement of God into the creation is seen by the Fathers of the Church, that is, the early teachers, the successors of the apostles, so to speak, as doing something to the creation itself. **It is a bringing about a completion of the creation itself.**

Now in time, as opposed to in tradition, but in time things sometimes grew and developed in a way that is not always seen as wholesome. **One of the things Vatican II tried to do was restore this idea of the Incarnation as a gift to the creation and to bring about fulfillment of the creation, not simply something for the salvation of souls.** That is too narrow. It is one of the by-products, but it is not the purpose of the Incarnation. So it goes to the very identity of what it means to be Catholic. It means to believe in Incarnation.

Talking about heresies, Incarnation was one of the things most disputed in the early Church. Many groups said, oh, no, no, that's not possible. And they disputed for various reasons. They said, well, God would never become human; that's not possible. Or they would say, well, God entered into the world, but not as a human being, more as some spiritual being and that spiritual being really wasn't fully human. It didn't experience what human beings experience, and so on. There are all kinds of objections to this belief. But this is **fundamental to our Catholic faith that really the full God became fully human.**

Concretely, however, the real Jesus of Nazareth formed solidarity, not with just everybody, and this is very important. So on one level this is a cosmic event, but now **the historical, personal Jesus of Nazareth actually formed solidarity with—whom?** With whom did Jesus himself form solidarity? Well, he was a Jew, true, but he was a marginal Jew. **He did not form solidarity with the three major streams within his own faith tradition.**

So there are three of those. The first was Pharisaism. **Pharisaism was a devotion to God through Torah.** I don't want to go into great detail, but Jesus rejected this concept that the

way to be devoted to God is through Torah. He accepted the Torah insofar as it was written down and there are 613 written commandments. But Jesus summarized them all in two. “To love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul,” which is found in Deuteronomy, and “To love your neighbor as yourself,” found in Leviticus. This was enough for Jesus as far as the Torah went. When it came to the Oral Torah, the so-called *Halakhah*, Jesus rejected that all together as from God. He didn’t say it was evil or you shouldn’t follow it, but he said it isn’t from God. It is mere human tradition. This is very important. So he rejected that whole level. **That is the whole synagogue system.**

The second stream of thinking is the Temple, **the Temple and Temple sacrifices.** Once again, we have the story of Jesus throwing out the animals and overturning the tables of those who sold the animals. People often see this disconnected from what Jesus taught. But it’s very much connected in rejecting this whole idea that God is pleased in this whole system of animal sacrifice, which was all held together by the priesthood and the group called the Sadducees. That really comes from a Hebrew word that has to do with the Zadokite family that goes all the way back to the time of David. So he rejected that.

Third, he rejected what was probably the most popular of all the groups, the **Zealots.** By “Zealots” we mean **people who were agitating for a political revolution**, and he surely did not go along with that. And he has some very, very specific teachings on “Turn the other cheek”; “Do not resist evil”; “Love your enemy.” This is not the belief of a Zealot. So he rejected that stream.

Well, what’s left? What’s left is **the periphery.** Now recently the word “periphery” has been used by **Pope Francis** to discuss where we have to go with the gospel. We have to go to the peripheries, meaning today **the poor** basically, the forgotten, the people who are left out of society. Did it mean exactly the same thing **in Jesus’ day?** Perhaps not. It meant, however, **those who were religious in a way that wasn’t the established popular ways**, not Zealotry—very popular; not Pharisaism—very accepted; not Temple worship—very official and well established, but—what?

Well, there is a deep tradition in Israel that is just as old as anything else. There is a deep tradition of **mysticism.** There is a profound tradition of **prophecy.** And there is a tradition that grew out of prophecy which is sometimes called **apocalyptic.** Well, I don’t want to go into the details of all these, but **Jesus picked up on all three of these.** And we know for a fact that **early Christian theology was apocalyptic, prophetic, and mystical.** St. Paul was surely a mystic. John, the Fourth Gospel, John was surely a mystic.

The Letter to the Hebrews is mysticism; it is Temple mysticism. It talks about how Jesus is really the high priest of the heavenly Temple. Where did that come from? It came from ancient Israel; it came from Moses. Moses had a vision of the heavenly Temple, and it’s out of that vision that he built the earthly tent. The directions came from what he saw. The tabernacle and later the Temple were an image of the whole creation. The plan had seven basic parts to it, each one representing one of the days of creation. I don’t want to go into that. But the high priest represented Adam, so this high priest belonged to the **original vision that Moses had** whence came this whole idea of having a tent, later on having a wooden temple, and then later a stone temple. However, much had been lost by the time we get to the

stone Temple **at the time of Jesus, the so-called Temple of Herod. In a sense the inner meaning had been lost.** Now this heavenly Temple is also found in **Ezekiel.** It is found in **Isaiah.** It is found in many of the **prophets.** It's found in **many books** that are not in our Bible. **So it was a living tradition, and it's something that fit in very well with Jesus' teaching and the early Christian understanding of him.** But it certainly wasn't established Judaism. **It was the sort of things that had been pushed out of Judaism or to the margins.**

In a similar way, prophecy. **Prophecy was a very important part of Jewish Scripture.** But Jesus' comment was, you have never listened to the prophets; in fact, you killed them all.

Apocalyptic does not play a great role in Jesus' own teaching as far as we can see, but it **did play a role in the early Christian thinking.** Now apocalyptic besides being **visionary,** having to do with visions and in that way **connected to mysticism,** also happens to be concerned with **the end times.** But prophecy itself had this idea of the end time. It had this idea of the Yom Yahweh, the Day of the Lord, the day of fulfillment. So it was hope focused, **hope oriented.** Now this, of course, had been taken over by the Zealot party and made into a hope for, you might say, a political solution to the problem of Israel.

That isn't what Jesus was about. But it was very much about **the end times** and about the focal point, which Teilhard de Chardin calls the Omega Point. You can call it whatever you like. But it means that **what we experience now is by no means the ultimate plan of God.** And that is itself revolutionary because the way that the people of that time looked at the world is that this reflects the will of God as God really wants it. So if you are blind, well, that's because you are being punished; God wants you to be blind. When Jesus cured the blind man, he was making a statement about their whole way of looking at life and at the will of God, and saying I am trying to tell you that God does not want you to be blind. You are not suffering punishment. When Jesus worked on the sabbath, he was saying God is not resting, and he is not finished. All of this, of course, was challenging to the very beliefs of the people of that time, both the leaders and the people. So he definitely challenged the thinking of that time. So **whenever the Spirit of Jesus is at work, it's going to be challenging to the thinking of the people.** Don't think that we are really more sophisticated than they were. We have different views, we in 2015 living in the West in a highly developed world. We have different views from the people at the time of Jesus, but we are no closer to God necessarily. **So we need to be challenged as well, and we need to think anew about everything. And what is God really trying to say? And what is God doing right now in our world? Those are the questions he raised.**

So this brings us to the term he used, the kingdom. **Kingdom means this new creation where the will of God actually is done.** So that's the *Lord's Prayer*: "Thy will be done on earth." That is praying for the kingdom. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth." That's the same thing. And when the will of God is done on earth, it looks like the people around Jesus, who now can see, although they were blind; who now can walk, although they were lame; who now can hear, although they were deaf. And this is taken in two ways, **both physically** because people saw it, but it was also meant **metaphorically** and the evangelist surely intended it that way, that **Jesus is opening the ears of people's hearts who don't hear the word of God and restoring the sight to people who don't see God at work.**

Pope Francis has expressed in the book that Hans has over there, *The Joy of the Gospel*, this idea that—it was also in Vatican II—that participating in the building up of the kingdom is something that affects and applies to every single Christian; that is, **we all have a calling**. So the ruling of divine justice can only take place when people make it so. In other words, to some degree **it does rely upon us to want what God wants**, and that itself is a change, sometimes very radical and sometimes very painful. So believers need to grow in their capacity to live in this graced dimension we call the kingdom of God, and this **graced dimension is also called holiness**. Now holiness was a word in the Old Testament too, and it was essential to the whole idea of covenant, because God called a people, but God is holy, so he called the people, again, into solidarity; covenant is an idea of solidarity. You could say it's almost equivalent. But covenant brings with it the sense of obligation. Some say that's the real meaning of the *berit*: covenant is obligation. It's not clear exactly what it means or meant, but **they are all connected solidarity, obligation, connection**. Some say even it means treaty. Those ideas are connected in the Old Testament.

There was this fierce battle in the Old Testament between Yahweh, the true God, and false gods. Well, what was the difference? Baal, for example. Well, what's wrong with Baal? Baal is another dialect; it means Adonai. Yahweh was called Adonai. In fact, they didn't call him Yahweh; they said Adonai, Lord. But Baal means Lord. So what's the difference—different name, different language? The big difference was Baal did not require anything morally of his devotees. **To relate to God in solidarity means to respond to his holiness by becoming holy**. “Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.” That's Leviticus. What Jesus objected to was not that; he accepted that one hundred percent. What he objected to was the way **holiness came to be understood, often in terms of external descriptions rather than internal changes of heart**.

So today we have this recognition through Vatican II that the mandate to make disciples applies to all the baptized. Is this a traditional Catholic view? No, it was an original view that had been lost, because as the Church grew and developed, the work of the Church was taken over by religious orders and ordained ministers, and they did the work and the laity didn't. The laity became passive. This is one of the great objections that Vatican II has to the tradition. That's why Yves Congar wrote a book called *Tradition and Traditions*, in which he said, well, not everything that's old is correct. Everything is not hallowed by usage. There are traditions that are bad traditions. One of them is this idea the laity is passive. No, **all the baptized are called to evangelize**. Now everyone has a different way of doing it, depending upon the circumstances of life; but still it's a general work of the whole Church. This was clarified by the Council and Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. So part of this is an acknowledgment that **some of the Church tradition was wrong** and there are different degrees of wrong.

Another part of it was what was called the “dust of Constantine.” St. Pope John XXIII said that, in calling the Council, **“We have to clean off the dust of Constantine from the Chair of Peter.”** What does that mean? The dust of Constantine means the **connecting of the Church with the state in this symbiotic relationship, Imperium Sacerdotium**. *Imperium* means empire; *Sacerdotium* technically means priesthood or it's translated that. It doesn't mean the priesthood I have; it means some kind of sacred power. And that is what happened from **380**. The Roman Empire decreed that the Catholic faith would be the religion

of the Empire, and **that caused a great perversion of the Church.** One of the things Vatican II said was, well, this is a terrible mistake. And believe it or not, there were still people that said, no, that was really better than the way it is now. It's very clear that it was not better, and was not the way things were prior to Constantine. So that's the "dust of Constantine" idea.

Especially crucial today is **New Evangelization.** What does that mean? Well, there are three things. First of all, **a new ardor**, a new enthusiasm. Secondly, it's **aimed at those living in traditional Christian cultures.** Well, it hasn't been the idea of evangelization. We've had evangelization all along, but we have been sending "missionaries" into mission territories. Now the mission territories are sending them back to us. The West has become de-Christianized, and so the New Evangelization is focused on the **de-Christianized areas of the world.** Thirdly, it is **lay driven with the support of the clergy**, not the other way around. And to some degree, this is new. I don't think one hundred percent it ever was that way. But it's an acknowledgment that it can't be any other way, that **the mission of the Church has to be carried out by the whole Church**, which is all inclusive, and can't be carried out just by one single group of people within the Church.

Now everyone acknowledges this is **a tall order** and much more daunting than any other idea that existed prior to Vatican II. Before it was relatively easy to become a Catholic. You had to believe in certain things rigidly, and not doubt; and then you had to do certain things, and you had to do them faithfully. That is not the whole, you might say, movement of the Church today.

So as Pope Francis points out, **the goal of evangelization is really sharing joy.** But of course in order to share joy, you have to have it. And **joy comes really from the transformation that we receive from the Holy Spirit.** So it really involves being involved with the Holy Spirit. And it involves this gift of hope, and hope is very important. Now we've always had the word hope in our theology lexicon because St. Paul said, "There are three great virtues: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest is love." Actually, he said *agape*, usually translated *caritas*, charity, and so the love of God. So hope was there, but it wasn't really emphasized very much. But now we realize that hope means looking forward to, not only for our own personal salvation, it means **looking forward to the salvation of the world and the redemption of the world and the restoration of the world.** And there is not much sign of it, so we need the gift of hope. If we were believing in signs that would be different. This is believing not in signs, but in promises. **And it is as important today as is faith: that we believe in the promises of God and work for them, work to advance them.**

One of the principal foci of the last several popes, including this one, was the poor. Now this is not, again, something they made up; they go back to Isaiah and **Jesus himself always taking the message to the poor.** Jesus quoted Isaiah when he went to Nazareth and read from the scroll and he said, "This is fulfilled in your hearing." So the idea that Jesus identified himself as the one who brings good news to the poor. Now especially **John Paul and Francis speak of the poor and our need to bring glad tidings to them and in whatever way possible to make the world more hospitable to the weakest and most afflicted.** So, this becomes not something in addition to faith, but as **an integral part of faith and hope. If you hope in God's promises, you have to help make them real and**

bring them into reality. All that flows from the fact that **Jesus is the Incarnation of the Word of God, and that he always worked at the margins of society and encouraged his apostles to do the same.** So we see who responded to him? Prostitutes, tax collectors, those who were demonized, those who were sick, and lepers, those who were outcasts. So that's the Incarnation. **That is basically the first of the essential characteristics of Catholic faith.**

The second is the belief that there is **one God subsisting in three Divine persons.** Now I don't want to get into a great theological discussion of the Trinity. The word "person" is unfortunate that has taken on a meaning in our culture that it did not originally have. *Persona* in Greek means a mask. The Greek word, *hypostasis*, meant a character. In Greek plays, you have one actor plays three or four different roles. I once saw Nicholas Nickleby, eight hours of play. Well, it has an enormous number of characters. They don't have an actor for each character, so they change outfits, they change their accent. In Greek plays, no, they change their mask, same actor but different character. So the Greek word for character is this word *hypostasis*, **so three Divine hypostases, personae.** So it's one God, but one God acting with different characteristics, with different roles within our world. This really goes back to the Old Testament—we don't want to get involved in it—but it is fundamental to our understanding of who we are as a Church, because we relate to God in this threefold way. **God remains always our Father, and in this way transcendent; but God has become our brother, in that way fraternal and familiar. And God is Spirit that works from within us, renewing us and transforming us.**

Again, the great argument in the Old Testament was about the true God, the one true God, versus many gods, many gods or false gods. Sometimes the issue was there are too many. Or sometimes they are false, and false gods are sometimes figments of people's imagination, created out of imagination, or even put into graven images: stone, silver, or gold; or they were actually creatures, demons, fallen angels, that were worshiped as if gods. Again none of the false gods or the demons require ethical conduct. **God requires ethical conduct. There has to be some sort of moral, spiritual response from people.**

Now it leads to what is called the **imitation of Christ.** That is not a biblical term; it was used later, but Paul already talks about it. In fact, Paul starts imitating God. How do we imitate God? Well, we live in the holiness of God. Well, there have been many different views of holiness. Kosher laws were a kind of holiness. But in the Church and in St. Paul and in John and in the gospels and in the teachings of the Fathers **the model of holiness, there is only one, it is Jesus himself.** If you want to know what holiness means, you have to look to Jesus. There is no other standard. There are no other criteria, just Jesus. Jesus is the standard, and we must model ourselves on him.

But this is the work of God, and so it is not something that happens overnight, and we see in our experience that God works very slowly. God allows, as Jesus said in the parable, the wheat to grow with the weeds; so that is part of the way God works. So we are learning all the time what God is doing. We don't actually know. And it's not fair to give people the impression: well, if you come and join us, we will tell you everything. We don't know either. We are all learning all the time about what God is doing, and how we can become like God, how God brings his inner life, his Trinitarian life, into us, because that's the whole idea.

Now this **transformation**, which takes place in different levels and different ways, is **celebrated in our Church in what is called the sacramental system or the sacramental life**. Without the sacramental life, you would not have a true Catholic Church. It is an essential attribute because **it's tied to the very idea of the Trinity. So in the sacramental life of the Church, we grow in our relationship to the Trinity; we grow in our communion with the Trinity, our friendship with the Trinity, our ability to collaborate with the Trinity. So the sacraments belong to what is essential to the practice of the Catholic faith.**

A fruitful sacramental life and effective growth in the manifold graces of the Spirit require ongoing formation, which means **a revisiting of the very sacraments which are not repeatable**. So it's required from time to time to **meditate on our Baptism** and our liturgy invites us to do that, to **meditate on our Confirmation, meditate on our Matrimony, meditate on our Holy Orders**, meditate on the things that we receive once and which are still affecting us and to **see what God is doing through that particular sign in our life at the very moment**, because it is **impossible for anyone at the moment that he or she receives any of the sacraments to understand the whole thing**. Nobody on the day of a wedding actually understands what marriage is. Nobody on the day of ordination actually knows what priestly service will entail. Nobody on the day of Baptism knows what it means to be reborn. Nobody in Confirmation actually knows what it means to be confirmed in the Spirit. **We learn this as life goes on**. And, sadly, some people never learn because they never go back in their own mind; they never reflect on and form themselves in the sacrament they have received. Why? Because they have substituted a magical idea. They think that, well, because they have got this now, they have got it. Well, it's not so simple. **It's relational. The Trinity is a relationship. God relates to himself: Father, Son, and Spirit. God relates to us. We relate to God. We have to grow in the relationship.**

Now if we study the history of the Catholic Church, we cannot fail to notice the capital importance placed on the Eucharist, because **the Eucharistic gathering** from the very beginning and the teaching of the Fathers **is par excellence the gathering of the Church**. And in the Eucharistic action we remember **the great act of Christ in giving up his life** for his flock, for his friends, for the world. He poured out his blood and so described his action. "This is my blood poured out for you and for many." **This is also the time when we are invited to partake of the fruit of this great love**, and the Church has always believed that. In receiving Holy Communion we are really partaking in the food: the body, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of Christ himself. **He is coming to feed us**. It is also a prime window into contemplation, because our life with God ends in contemplation of the Trinity. **And the greatest sacramental help toward contemplation is the Eucharist itself**. It is **Christ's desire to accompany the communicant** from that point on into life, wherever that communicant is going: to work, home, to play, wherever, Christ wants to be there consciously.

The Spirit is also present in the word proclaimed in the assembly. This is, again, a fundamental teaching. Now Vatican II did say something that I find a little bit odd. It said the **Catholic Church holds in equal veneration the word and the sacrament**. Well, that's a surprise. I've never read that before. That's in the document on the Word of God, *Dei Verbum*. And I don't know anywhere where that has ever been said before. We might say

that there is one thing the Reformation did: it maybe taught us a little more about the importance of the word of God than we knew before, because the emphasis on the word of God was not equal to the sacrament at any time I can find. For example, **in the early Church priests were not allowed to preach except in the rarest cases** where the bishop would say, “I can’t be present, and I want you to preach for me.” **It was the bishop who preached.** But the bishop didn’t always celebrate; and when the bishop wasn’t celebrating Mass, there was no preaching, there was no teaching. And when the bishop was there it was long. The bishop sat and taught lengthy teachings at Mass. But no bishop, no teaching.

Now during the Middle Ages before the Reformation, there was a great saint. Who was it that said we have to get back to the word of God? Thirteenth century. **St. Dominic**, and Dominic realized that the Catholic people didn’t know their faith. And he figured they didn’t know their faith because they were never being preached to adequately. He **founded the Order of Preachers; they were to preach, and to regain the world for Christ from the Muslims.** His whole idea was that the Church has to counteract the influence of Islam by, **first of all, authentic preaching; second of all, good philosophy**—good philosophy. And where did he think good philosophy came from? Aristotle—**Aristotle. So that’s how the whole scholastic tradition began.** It was an effort to displace the sophistication of the Islamic philosophers from Spain that were way ahead of everybody else in Europe who were Christian. So the basic motivation is still good. **We need good preaching.** But now it’s spread out. Now even **deacons are allowed to preach on a regular basis**, although now people are disputing that, saying, well, they preach too much.” And I do believe that in time we will have officially lay preachers officially approved by the bishop and so on. But we have to walk slowly.

Now there is no more extensive use of Scripture today, believe it or not, than in the Roman Mass. There is no church service of any denomination, of any religion that has more Scripture in it than the Roman Mass, not the Eastern Rites, not Protestant services, not anything. It is the most extensive one. So in this way the Church is living by what it said: we hold word and sacrament equal. Well, apparently it is because now it has given such an honor to the word that had previously been thought of, I believe, as a prelude more than an equal partner to the sacrament.

Now **during the Middle Ages**, for example, you saw these cathedrals with these magnificent ambos in the middle where there were steps, you had to go up in procession, but they were probably only used on major holidays and holy days. They probably weren’t used very much. **So preaching existed, but it was holy days, holidays, major feasts, not all the time.**

So in general sacraments open us to the heart of the Father, enable us to live like the Son in word and deed, through the grace of God, precisely by the outpouring of the Spirit’s gifts, virtues, fruits, powers. There is no superior way for us **to remain rooted in God’s word united with God and one another** and filled with the mercy and goodness of God than to **faithfully and fruitfully, actively participate in the Eucharistic liturgy.** And that’s what Vatican II says in the document on the sacred liturgy.

The liturgy ends with this dismissal: we are sent forth. The word “Mass” actually comes from the word *Missa est*, meaning in idiomatic Latin, **you are sent forth, precisely to live a life of service and mission**, again, primarily to the margins in solidarity with Jesus himself who identified with and served on the margins of society.

It would be impossible to innumerate the many ways that one can **carry out the mission of the Church**. But, again, looking to our tradition, there are two qualities that the Fathers talk about, and the first is **simplicity**. Life is not about accumulating things or promoting oneself or pursuing wealth or power or fame or pleasure. These are the four false gods St. Thomas mentions. Simplicity is really a fundamental quality that a Christian is called to. It **means living for God**. It means putting God in God’s rightful place in one’s own desires. And simplicity’s sister is **caritas, charity**. The word caritas actually means “lack.” You have seen a caret, a caret sign, it means something is missing. Caritas means something’s missing. Well, in our lives we are created with an infinite capacity for God, for love, and it is caritas that fills that. So **it refers to fullness of divine love and life that seeks to give itself away**.

So the Church continues to grow and develop, and one of the areas of growth today is the theology of Matrimony. And that’s the way I will end. I will give you some time to discuss things, but I want to mention that there is a synod coming this fall discussing various themes, in particular one of the topics is Matrimony and the whole issue of divorce. You know that Christ said that, “Anyone who divorces his wife commits adultery.” So that’s been a fundamental belief. But we also have what is called an annulment. **An annulment means this is not really a marriage**. In other words, there is from the very beginning a distinction between what Jesus meant. He said, “In the beginning.” He is talking about something God was doing. This we could call a graced effect. This is where the Church got the idea that Matrimony is a sacrament. **So we have graced effect, in the beginning God made male and female and the two become one by the power of God in a covenant. This is indissoluble**.

However, not every apparent or technically putative—putative means people think—not every putative marriage is truly a covenant with God, therefore not truly, in our terminology, valid. This has absolutely nothing to do with state law. The Church has never said that the state had any role to play at all in creating marriage, in defining marriage, in regulating marriage—nothing. **The Church has always said that the state’s only role is in the secondary issues such as property**: who owns what. So many people are married putatively; that is, they believe they are married, but whether they are really married in the eyes of God is another matter. Now the Church has never sought to make any judgments about people outside of the Church until one of them wants to come into the Church. So St. Paul says, well, if you have two people married, we respect their marriage; however, if the non-Christian will not live in peace with the one who wants to be a Christian, then St. Paul says let them separate and let the Christian marry someone else. **So does the Church absolutely believe in the indissolubility of marriage?** Well, no, there is an exception.

Secondly, two Catholics married, later say, you know, our marriage is falling apart, and I think **from the very beginning there was something wrong**. Well, my husband was an alcoholic or my wife was a sociopath or something else. Those are two exaggerations. Those are actually grounds, but there are many others. Actually fundamental immaturity has been

called a ground for annulment, although I think everyone is immature, but some are immature hopelessly and some hopefully. So the Church devised this way called an annulment. **An annulment is a statement that as far as we know this marriage doesn't seem to be valid.** And recently, in fact, this week **the pope made the annulment process more streamlined.** I don't know what it involves, but you will read about it. You will read about it; the pope made it easier. And what the secular news says about it, take with a grain of salt. They don't necessarily know or understand. But sometimes you read, and I recently read an article in a magazine that said, well, if a marriage is not annulled, then it's valid. No, no, because when a marriage is annulled, that states that it never was valid. So you can't say it's valid until it's annulled, no. We don't know. Now because we don't know, the presumption—this is a very important word, the legal presumption—the legal presumption is if we don't know, then we will presume it is valid. That is what is being challenged today.

Cardinal Kasper, Cardinal Marx, both Germans, say we should not presume that if a marriage has failed and the people have remarried, they are now in a good relationship, why should we presume that the first one was valid, even if we can't prove it was annulled? That's the question, argued hotly right now. In general the Germans are saying let old marriages die, and the others are saying, well, no, you can't, and so on. So how this is going to work out, I don't know. I'm just telling you this is what is happening right now. **But the idea is if a person is in fact in a null marriage, if the marriage was null, they still have a right to marry.** Now the Church always said that. That is part of our canon law, everyone has a right to marry. Well, now if they have a right to marry, but they can't marry in the Church because the Church law presumes they are married to somebody else, but that happens to be false, or far as we know it is false, or we don't know if it's false or true, then if they get married, they are excused from the form because the Church has made it impossible; and **according to ancient Church tradition people are actually married because they desire to be married and are free to.** They don't need a justice of the peace. They don't need a wedding license. They don't need anything. So many of these people who are divorced and remarried actually are validly married, or at least may be validly married for all we know. That's what Cardinal Marx and Cardinal Kasper are saying. **Since we don't know, why don't we give them the benefit of the doubt?** That's the argument, or at least part of it. Others say, well, you can't do that because you can't trust anybody. So that's the argument, see.

So in the area of marriage and in the area of sexuality there is a sort of growing development of understanding about things, and I cannot tell you where it's going. Traditionally sexuality was considered first and foremost for procreation. Today even in the days of John Paul II he admitted that there was another aspect to it that was equally valid, but it could never be separated from procreation. Many people believe that that is simply not realistic. So that's where we are. **How it will work out? Who will have the last word? I don't know.**

The Discussion Questions:

What is your own personal image of Jesus, and what is the meaning for you?

How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in your life?

Has another believer ever shared her or his faith with you? What affect did it have?

What are your hopes and fears for the future of the Church?