

**St. Therese Catholic Church**

Religion of the Day  
*Session V*

April 16, 2024

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**Overview**

Religion of the Day	
Session I	Introduction and the Religion of the Day
Session II	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 1 - 6)
Session III	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 7 - 12)
Session IV	Further Notes on Progressive Religion
Session V	Catching the Diseases of the World
Session VI	The Winning Stance
Session VII	Conclusion: The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

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### Internal Battle

- Chapters 2 and 3 looked at the external battle that the Church faces via the first principles of modern ideologies. To believe in Christ means one is converted *out of* an alternative religion.
- Chapter 4 looks at the second battle or internal battle the Church faces in every age. We will look at how the religious ideas of the age oftentimes make their way into the Church - what the author calls diseases.
- In response, the Church must develop the antibodies to cure those diseases and make them available to the wider culture.

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### Internal Battle

- The Gospel of John says that "*the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*" (Jn 1:5).
- Christ is the light of the world. He says, "*Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" (Jn 8:12)
- As the Body of Christ, the Church is the special instrument of God's action on the earth, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and gifted with the strength and resources to throw back whatever darkness the powers of evil may concoct (68).

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### Internal Battle

- Naturally, if the Church is the presence of Christ and its vocation is to be the light of the world, then why is there so much darkness in it?
- Why are we faced with so many instances of failure, lack of faithfulness, and moral evil, even among some of the Church's leaders? (68)
- In short, if the Church is the light of Christ for the world, there is an immediate objection that it has not been a credible witness of Christ's light to substantiate that claim.

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### Internal Battle

- Additionally, the Church has not been able to eradicate war and injustice or to bring about universal harmony and charity in the societies it inhabits, and when we notice that the Church cannot always even keep such ideals present and strong in its internal life, we can grow doubtful about its claims (68).
- **Note:** Pope Benedict XVI asked a similar question about Jesus - "What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity, and a better world? The question is very simple: God. He has brought God, and now we can know his face, now we can call upon him." (Jesus of Nazareth)

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## Internal Battle

- The internal failings and failure to bring about healing and unity for a broken world - the result can be that discouragement, anger, and anxiety – none of them fruits of the Holy Spirit – often plagues Church members (69).
- **Response:** We need a healthy understanding of the Church; we must abandon the false view that the Church is a perfect society (no internal corruption) or a silver bullet that magically fixes the whole world.
- **Key:** The Church is the center of human history. The battle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this World take place partly *inside* the Church (69).

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## The Shock of the Incarnation

- Christ's claims are *radically* different from other spiritual founders (70).
- Jesus claims are so radically and momentously different from any other religious figure that they put him in a category entirely by himself (70).
- The many founders and leaders of the world's great religions have presented themselves as humans addressing other humans. They have spoken on behalf of the divine as prophets or have pioneered a way of wisdom as sages (70).

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### The Shock of the Incarnation

- Jesus does something more. He made the astonishing and even outrageous claim that though he was a man, he was also God himself, the Creator of the universe and the origin of all existence, who had come to live among his creatures (71).
  - **John 8:58:** Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.
  - **John 20:28:** Thomas falls at Jesus' feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!"

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### The Shock of the Incarnation

- If Jesus is God, then he is by necessity the absolute center of human history (71).
- If it is true, as Christians hold, that the almighty and infinite God really did, once in history, visit the earth in bodily form, that he took on human flesh, walked among us, and performed an act of cosmic significance that touches every human life, then that occurrence is by many orders of magnitude the most important thing that has happened since the creation of the world (71).
- It is *the* event that that interprets everything else (71).

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## The Shock of the Incarnation

- **C.S. Lewis:** One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of *no* importance, and if true, is of *infinite* importance (71).
- The one thing it cannot be is *moderately* important (71).




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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

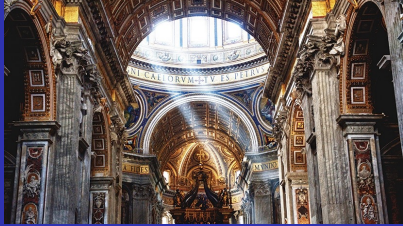
- Christ continues to be mysteriously but genuinely present and incarnate in the world (71).
- While Jesus walked here on earth, he was constrained by limits of time, space, and the imperfections of human understanding. But by the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would dwell within their very minds and hearts (71).
- The Church really is Christ's body; he is mysteriously present now in the Church, communally and in its individual members (72).

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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

- When the Creeds call the Catholic Church “holy” as an article of faith, they are not describing the virtue of its members, many of whom are far from holy.
- They are referring to the presence of the Holy Spirit as the principle of the Church’s life and of Christ himself as the head of its body, the Church (72).




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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

What the Church is <u>NOT</u>	
A society of like-minded individuals who have voluntarily gathered together for a common project.	A humanitarian institution founded for the care of the poor, the sick, and others in need.
A man-made, bureaucratic structure to help things along organizationally, a largely political body that goes forward by the same dynamics as other political and organizational groupings.	A utopian society with a blueprint for ordering human life according to perfect justice and peace (in the present age).

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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

### What the Church is NOT

A democratic body that understands itself and determines its beliefs in keeping with the ideas of the majority of its members, or for that matter with the ideas of the minority of its members.	A society of so many millions of people who happen to be alive at the moment, a body whose numbers fluctuate with the generations and whose fortunes change with the times, like nations and ethnic and racial groups.
One religious grouping among others of a similar kind, a repository of spiritual experience and wisdom about meaning, morality, and how to cope with life, whose insights are to be sorted through and applied or rejected according to each individual's best lights.	An archaic organization with an outmoded form of belief and practice that may once have served its time but is no longer suited to the needs and desires of modern people.

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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

- The Church is not an unfortunate mistake, a human corruption of what should have been a purely spiritual and immaterial set of religious ideals and sentiments (73).
- Some of these descriptions are simply false, and others touch on a true but limited aspect of the Church's nature (73).
- **Key:** All are seriously reductionist (too simple). They make the Church much smaller and more superficial than it truly is (73).

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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

What the Church <u>IS</u>	
The New Humanity, the redeemed human race now sharing the life of God himself.	Filled with the beauty and light of God and centered on the figure of Christ, who is head and bridegroom, ever leading and begetting new life within the Church. The Church is squarely in the hands of God.
A heavenly body pulsating with divine brightness and life, the majority of whose members are no longer earthly mortals but part of a vast company who are now in God's presence or making their way to him through a process of purification.	The vast majority of the Church's members need no faith because they are already home, sharing in delighted communion with God. They have reached the destiny for which they were created.

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## The Church – Incarnation in Time

What the Church <u>IS</u>	
The Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and Apostles are all part of the eternal Church, who reflect the goodness and light of God and incessantly carrying on a spiritual battle with forces of darkness.	Church Militant is a kind of resistance movement behind the lines of our ancient enemy – souls being perfected and prepared for their true home and battling to live according to heavenly harmonies and witnessing for Christ.
The Church now existing in our space-time world and that consists of mortal humans (Church Militant) – is a colony of the heavenly Church on earth, an outpost of the great company, and through a thin veil is in constant communication, friendship, and communion with angels and with the Church's perfected human members.	The stragglers of the Church on earth, we who are still broken, diseased, and in the process of healing, are the least numerous, least impressive, least potent, and least permanent part of the Church, inhabiting the outskirts of its life. Christ leads us along our path to eternity, and we are already beginning to participate in the deathless life of our true home.

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### The Church – Incarnation in Time

- A reductionist and worldly way of seeing the Church asks, “The way things are going, will the Church be able to survive? (75)
- When the Church is seen correctly (from Christ’s perspective), it becomes clear that there is no question of the Church’s “surviving.” (75)
- The Church is gloriously alive and beyond the reach of death. It is the fallen world that will not survive. It also becomes clear that the Church is at the center of this world’s drama (75).

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### The Church – Incarnation in Time

- Just as the whole of human history was turning on the person of Jesus even when he was unknown and living in a small town in Galilee, so the whole of human history turns on the person of Jesus as he is present and working in and through the body he has chosen for himself, the Church (76).



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### The Divine Human Church

- Jesus is both divine and human. You could see him and talk to him, but his divine nature was hidden and not easy to perceive. Only with eyes enlightened by faith could Jesus be seen truly, as the divine Son of God (76).
- The same reality is true for the Church. Because the Church is Christ's body, it is both divine and human.
- The most important aspect (by far) of the Church is its **divine nature**: the presence of the Holy Spirit within it, the channel of saving graces flowing through the sacraments, the living fire of the Scriptures, the truths about God and humanity that are treasured and taught, and the enthralling personality of Christ at the core of its life that gives form to everything it does (76).

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### The Divine Human Church

- Just as Jesus provided signs of his divinity when he was a man, so the Church continues to provide signs (glimpses) of Christ's divinity within his mystical body.

Signs of Christ's Divinity in the Church	
Saints – transformed by divine grace	Sacraments - Eucharist
Healings	Ability to recover and renew
Exorcisms	Fidelity to teaching for centuries
Fulfilled prophecies	Transformed lives and cultures

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### The Divine Human Church

- Along with divine glimpse, we also see the broken fallen human side of the Church.

#### Signs of Broken Humanity in the Church

Scandalously bad behavior of some	Often unimpressive and small-minded ways some in the Church go about in their business
Mediocre spiritual life of many more	Faults and limitations of even its best members

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### The Divine Human Church

- The fate of the Church is not decided by appearance, by public relations, by political or social machinations and manipulations.
- It is not upheld by money, by influential connections, or by human laws. These facts play a secondary role (78).
- **Key:** The strength of the Church is found in its heavenly divine life. It is rooted in the eternal regions where it cannot be touched; it is animated by the life of God himself inhabiting it as his body (78).

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## Catching All the Diseases of the World

- Read chapter IV
- Catching All the Diseases of the World
- Pages 80 - 94

