

St. Therese Catholic Church

Religion of the Day
Session VI

April 30, 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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Review

- We continue to look at the second battle or internal battle the Church faces in every age. In the past session, we looked at incorrect and correct beliefs about the Church.
- The Church is not a society of like-minded individuals (a social club), a man-made political organization, a humanitarian institution founded for the poor, a utopian society with high ideals, a democratic body, an archaic institution with outdated beliefs, or an unfortunate mistake differing from what Jesus originally willed.
- Some of these views are simply false, while others contain a kernel of truth.

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Review

- The Church is the presence of Christ today, filled with the beauty and light of God centered on Jesus Christ.
- The Church exists in heaven (Church triumphant) where it is already at home worshipping God with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints.
- The Church also exists "on the way" (Church suffering) as it is purified in God's love so that it may be fit to worship God.
- The Church exists on earth (Church militant) as it undergoes the process of healing, nourished, and prepared for its true homeland of heaven.

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In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

- We are now suffering from a self-inflicted wound that inevitably moved us toward evil, and our denial of God had delivered us into a grim slavery to dark powers too strong for us (80).
- In response, God brought a kind of D-Day invasion with flags flying and the enemy smashed and retreating (81).
- God slipped behind enemy lines in way that human beings could never have imagined – becoming a little baby (one of us!) in need of care, love, and protection. In this way, God did not coerce obedience, but respected our freedom and invited us to love him.

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In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

- Along with respecting our freedom, the incarnation aimed to address the injustice of our rebellion against God.
- The rebellion against God is an infinite offense (as God is infinitely Good). Therefore, God clothed himself not only in our humanity, but in all the outward corruptions of our fallen humanity (82).
- Jesus suffered all the consequences of sin (interiorized all the evil in his person or took on all the diseases of our broken world) in his sufferings (mocking, whippings, crown of thorns, nails in hands/feet, etc.) and in his death.

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In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

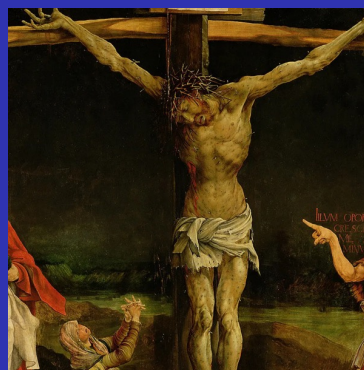
- In doing so, Jesus generated the immunity in his blood, developing the antibodies against our moral diseases, and he shared that medicine with his followers so that they, too, could triumph over their spiritual sickness and escape death.
- He then directed them to bring his healing remedy to an ailing race. This is the meaning of the Crucifixion: that death has become the road to life; that from seeming defeat comes resounding victory (83).

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In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh

- God sneaks behind enemy lines – born as a little baby.
- He takes all the diseases of the world (the consequences of sin – lying, cheating, abandonment, rejecting, idolatry, theft, jealousy, murder, etc.) upon himself.
- He generates immunity through antibodies (forgiveness, truth, love, beauty, goodness, etc.).



Isenheim Altarpiece - Grünewald

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Catching All the Diseases

- In every age, Christ in the Church addresses the diseases of the world by the process of crucifixion, by taking them upon himself and healing them from within his own body (83).
- He does this by speaking the truth in the midst of the world's deceptions, by enduring the hostility of those who love the darkness rather than the light (83), and by bringing light and salvation to the world through his suffering.
- **Martyr:** It is Christ again giving his life for the sake of the world (83).

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Catching All the Diseases

- While the *first front* of the Church is to confront the darkness of the world with truth, the second theater of the warfare, a *second front*, is to fight for the truth on behalf of humanity that takes place *inside* the Church (83).
- The Church is at the heart of humanity, and it is within the Church that a decisive battle for humanity is taking place in every age (83).
- **Key:** Just as Christ in his body of flesh contracted all the diseases of fallen humanity and generated immunity in his blood, so also the Church – Christ's mystical body on earth – contracts the diseases of each age (84).

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Catching All the Diseases

- Certain members of the Church are prone to catch the special diseases afflicting the human race in each generation – the current variant of the virus of error or the strain of moral corruption – the particular scandal of fallen humanity in a given time (84).
- The Church then suffers and grows sick, and once again a feverish battle takes place within the body of Christ. Afflicted and tempted in its members, the struggle and heartbreak are great.
- But, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Church possesses the spark of divine life (84).

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Catching All the Diseases

- This ensures that the Church is never ultimately vanquished but instead overcomes each virus of error or sin, which it is then able to offer as a medicine from its bloodstream to the world, so as to draw more and more of the rest of humanity into the experience of divine life: healed, healthy, free (84).
- **Matt. 16:18:** And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.
- **Key:** Christ has promised that his Church will triumph.

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Catching All the Diseases

- We are living in a sea of modern secular ideologies that at their core are religions – each promising to perfect the world in some way. We cannot expect the Church as a whole to fly above all the world's imperfections, distant from its darkness and free of its diseases (84 – 85).
- This mingling of God's perfection (medicine) and our imperfections (diseases), of God's utter goodness and our sinfulness, is our heavenly Father's chosen means of bringing the human race back to life.
- **Key:** God works through our messiness (not above it).

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 1: Israel, God's Chosen People

- After the fall, the world was enmeshed in idolatry or the worship of false gods rather than the One True God.
- In response, God calls one man, Abraham, and gathers together one small and unimpressive people, the Israelites (87).
- The Old Testament is mainly the story of God's battle against idolatry *inside* his chosen people, the Old Testament Church (87).

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 2: "My mission is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mt 15:24)

- It is a noteworthy fact that Jesus – God among us – spent virtually all of his time on earth with the Church, the house of Israel (88).
- Jesus' ultimate plan was to gain all civilizations, but he did so by dealing first and primarily with the Jews. His fiercest battles were against the corruptions of Church people: Pharisees and Scribes, Kings and High Priests (88).

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Snapshots of God's Action

- When we think of changing the world – and if ever there was someone who planned to radically change the world, it was Jesus – our minds naturally go to centers of power and influence, to large movements invoking vast numbers, and to maximum use of communication (88 – 89).
- Yet the one whose coming changed all of human history was entirely unknown to the great world of his time (89).
- **Key:** Our Lord changes the world one heart at a time.

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 3: The Gospel drama

- In the cosmic drama of salvation, God assigned most of the important parts to members of the Church, the Jewish people, both as heroes and villains (89).
- **Heroes:** Mary Magdalene, Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus.
- **Villains:** Judas, Pharisees, Caiaphas, Herod, etc.

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Snapshots of God's Action

- Jesus' concern, wide as the human race, was focused on the battle within the Church, among those he had chosen for his purpose (89).
- What was true in the Gospel drama is true in the continuing battle for humanity (89).
- Christians have often been given the important parts in the drama of the human race: the best and worst, the greatest heroes and the greatest villains have been members of the Church (89).

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 4: The teaching of Jesus

- Just as Jesus was *made to be sin* for the sake of destroying sin, so the Church would have both weeds and wheat within it (Mt 13:24-30): there would be living and dead branches attached to the Vine (Jn 15:1-6).
- Jesus taught his followers that the society he was establishing would exhibit both great holiness and great evil (90).
- He expected the best and worst of humanity were to be found within the Church (90).

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 5: The battles of the early Church

- The early disciples continued the fight Jesus had begun, often battling *inside* the nascent Church (90).
- It was not that the apostles were unaware of the need to battle the world's darkness. But they recognized that a key strategic battleground against that darkness would be inside the Church (91).

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Snapshots of God's Action

Snapshot 6: The history of the Church through the centuries

- The same pattern can be seen throughout the history of the Church's life (92).
- **Key**: It happens in every age that the Church, in some portion of its members, contracts the diseases of its time, and what often begins as a spiritual battle against an external opponent becomes an internal fight (92).


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Snapshots of God's Action

False Teaching (Disease)	Explanation
"Judaizing" tendency in early Church	Sought salvation in the works of the Mosaic Law (Paul: Salvation by grace)
Early Gnostic currents	Denied the goodness of creation and emptied meaning of Christ's crucifixion (Material world is good/Christ in flesh)
Arian error	Denied Christ's divinity (Athanasius clarified Christ is truly God)
Glorification of warfare and personal honor among Germanic warrior peoples	In place of the glorification of war came the chivalric code and the theories of limited and just war


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Snapshots of God's Action

False Teaching (Disease)	Explanation
Creeping worldliness in Middle Ages	Worldly behavior was countered by the medicine of the Gregorian reforms and the Cluniac and Cistercian revivals
Medieval cities	Corrupting influence of cities brought forth the medicine of Francis, Dominic, and the mendicant orders
Materialistic philosophies	Entered the bloodstream of medieval universities that provoked the medicine of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure

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Snapshots of God's Action

False Teaching (Disease)	Explanation
Rampart power politics and worldliness of popes during the time of the Renaissance	Popes losing sight of heaven instigated the medicine of Trent and new religious orders like the Jesuits, the Theatines, and the Oratorians
Unbelieving rationalism and violent revolution in the 18 th century	Troubled times sparked the medicine of liturgical renewal, of priestly reform in figures like John Vianney and John Bosco; relationship between faith and reason
Current confusion concerning marriage and human sexuality	Anthropological and sexual confusion is stimulating a deeper understanding of the truths of human anthropology as delve deeper into meaning of being created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26).

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Snapshots of God's Action

- It has been the work of Christ to address the wounds of fallen humanity with his divine medicine through the medium of his body, the Church, doing battle with his perennial truths against the characteristic falsehoods and moral diseases of the time (94).
- Christ sifts and sorts each person and every culture in turn; raising up great saints, who through brave witness and in the crucible of suffering become themselves the healing antibodies in the Church's bloodstream; maintaining and strengthening what was good and rejecting what was evil (94).

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Snapshots of God's Action

- It is a process that is never complete or perfect in this age of the world. The task of conversion is ongoing, and the holiest and wisest among us are constantly being taken off to their reward, leaving the process to begin anew with each individual soul (94).
- Still, significant conversion has been brought about, and treasures have been laid down for the future and disseminated as leaven – but only after serious conflict inside the Church (94).
- **Key:** The saints were never shocked or dismayed by the fight they were waging (94).

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Catching All the Diseases of the World

- Read chapter V
- Fighting the battle inside the Church
- Pages 95 - 116

