

Supplemental Information for  
*Why Catholic? Journey through the Catechism*  
*The Profession of Faith: What We Believe*  
To group leaders of  
Christ the King Parish, Springfield, Illinois

By Deacon Al Laabs  
February/March, 2010

Session 10: “One Church with Diverse Roles”

### **Suggested Environment**

Note again the usual accompaniments of the CCC and the USCCA as well as a color appropriate for the Lenten season. It might be nice to have a parish bulletin on your table since in a way it is a summary of all those activities, liturgical, social, and other that bind us together into a community.

### **Lifting Our Hearts**

Note the tone the prayer sets as we are all called to be lights to each other and collectively to be light to the world.

### **Sharing Our Good News**

I think that asking if anyone took time to read sections of the Acts of the Apostles would be a good bridge into this session on Church with diverse roles. My reason for saying that is simply that the Acts has often been called the history of the early church and such issues as evangelism, witnessing, community sharing, etc., are mentioned almost as the “effects” of a life lived within the Gospel good news. Early on in Acts, Chapter six to be exact, the need for some members to be of special service to the growing number of disciples results in the formation of the order of deacon (see Acts 6: 1-6 and note the form of the commissioning: “the men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them”—just what happens to this day in an ordination ceremony).

### **Reflection One “A Loving Communion”**

A good story that I’m sure I’ll be reminded of it when we are having one of our practice sessions for servers and RCIA members and others during the coming Easter Season as flower arrangements and other preparations are made, especially Holy Saturday morning. I’d suggest you spend a few moments just talking about all the various organizations, committees, service opportunities, and ministries that exist in the parish. It is a great background through which to

realize the wonderful diversity of time, talent, and treasure that makes up a vibrant and living parish community.

### **“To be a Light to the Nations”**

“Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature,(1) to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church.” This is the very opening sentence of the first Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), and you’ll also find this quoted at the start of CCC 748. You might find it interesting for yourself to compare the translation in the catechism with the above since I copied the above from the Vatican web site. If you want to read more of the Council’s document, [here’s the link](#) which was also in last week’s session 9. You’ll recall in session 7 we ended by lifting our hearts around the theme of light. It’s also neat to call to everyone’s mind that beautiful line from the beginning of John’s Gospel “...and this life was the light of the human race and this light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...” (John 1: 4-5). And how many times have been told we are to be light to the world?

If do read on in *Lumen Gentium*, you will find a number of images of the Church. Keep in mind that using images fits in very well with the title of this first chapter of LG, “The Mystery of the Church.” It does make sense, as the paragraph at the top of page 74 indicates, that no definition is simply given, rather images and a theme “the people of God” are used to portray the sense of what it means to be a community of believers through which the light of Christ does indeed shine. I think you’ll find it interesting even if you do it yourself to look over CCC 751 – 752 which describes some names and images of the Church. Similarly, sections CCC 753 – 757 have some wonderful paragraphs on symbols of the Church.

I mention these because it may take some of the realists in each group a bit of time to get a feel for the idea of the Church as mystery. It might help to take a look at the very last line in the third paragraph on page 74 that says “...the Church is both visible and spiritual.” This discussion fits in well with the idea of the Church as a sacrament, which also can be a stretch to understand. You might recall the discussion last year about sacraments during which it was said that the word “sacrament” is really a translation of the Eastern Church word for mystery—which it still is. Sacraments get their mysterious character because they have this very real, visible side to them (like water in baptism) which creates a new life (albeit invisible) in the one receiving the sacrament. Similarly, the Church has this very visible side to it, the people of God living today, and at its head (although invisible) is Christ together with the communion of Saints and other heavenly creatures. That’s the very nature of that statement in the paragraph that says “...we are affirming in faith” all the above that we understand about this Church of ours, at heart a mystery.

I would also suggest you ask your folks to underline in the next paragraph the words, “...the visible and the spiritual are not two separate realities.” It becomes very harmful if we see this as some sort of duality in which one of these is “more real” than the other. Where this has sometimes caused difficulties is when the real need to change unjust social situations is not given the importance it should have because “well, you know, this isn’t our real home, after

all.” Those are my words but they could well be those of Karl Marx who accused all religions of being used as an “opium” of the people. In other words, the hope we hold out for life eternal gets used to belittle real injustice and a need to change “this world” where we are indeed working out our salvation. For a good discussion of the visible/spiritual, earthly/heavenly, I would suggest reading CCC 771.

I think that the discussions in this session of the four marks of the Church (One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic) are well done. I just might remind everyone that Pope Benedict has always had a goal to try to stress and work towards “that they all may be one in Christ.” Perhaps this will help you understand why he did something that he was criticized for recently: namely, lifting the excommunication of some very conservative followers of an archbishop who had almost broken away because of Vatican II. And also why he authorized the use of the former Latin rite for those diehards who still feel that is the only true liturgy.

If we understand that holiness is only possible because we have Christ present to us in Word and Sacrament, then we can understand how it is possible for individuals to sin and even possible historically for the Church’s human element to sin. We’ve had that issue recently in clergy scandals and a look back in history will find those time periods when the “Church” was too involved in the secular world and too concerned only with its worldly power. But even when things were perhaps not what they should have been, it is possible also to see the guiding hand of the Spirit present through those times and preserving the Church, human/divine, even to this very day. That shouldn’t surprise us since Christ promised his Spirit would always be with us and we do believe in Him and His Word.

### **Scripture: Pondering the Word**

**“Jesus prays for his Disciples.”**

#### **John 17: 1-26**

- 1 <sup>1 2</sup> When Jesus had said this, he raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you,
- 2 <sup>3</sup> just as you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him.
- 3 <sup>4</sup> Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.
- 4 I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do.
- 5 Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began.
- 6 I revealed your name <sup>5</sup> to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.
- 7 Now they know that everything you gave me is from you,
- 8 because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

9 I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours,  
10 and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them.  
11 And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are.  
12 When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled.  
13 But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely.  
14 I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.  
15 <sup>6</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.  
16 They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.  
17 Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.  
18 As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.  
19 And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.  
20 "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,  
21 so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.  
22 And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,  
23 I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.  
24 Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am <sup>7</sup> they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.  
25 Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me.  
26 I made known to them your name and I will make it known, <sup>8</sup> that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

This scripture is taken from the USCCB web site and the footnotes in the small colored letters can be accessed back to their site. So much could be said about this but I would encourage you to perhaps stress that these words to his apostles are also words to us as his disciples and the "children" of those apostles since we are as the People of God, apostolic. I think the very first footnote suggests that very intimacy that Jesus had with his Father, who he taught us to call our Abba. I can almost picture Jesus with his arms raised over his disciples at the Last Supper as he prayed this prayer. Here is the first footnote:

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [1-26] Climax of the last discourse(s). Since the sixteenth century, this chapter has been called the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus. He speaks as intercessor, with words addressed directly to the Father and not to the disciples, who supposedly only overhear. Yet the prayer is one of petition, for immediate ([John 17:6-19](#)) and future ([John 17:20-21](#)) disciples. Many phrases reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer occur. Although still in the world ([John 17:13](#)), Jesus looks on his earthly ministry as a thing of the past ([John 17:4, 12](#)). Whereas Jesus has up to this time stated that the disciples could follow him ([John 13:33, 36](#)), now he wishes them to be with him in union with the Father ([John 17:12-14](#)).

This last wish for his disciples is indeed what Jesus wishes for each and every one of us—to be in union with the Holy Trinity for all eternity.

### Sharing Questions

Since God through Jesus wishes us to be holy and to be in union with his Trinitarian nature, it might be fun to talk about this question from both the perspective of what do we mean by being holy and also tell stories about people we consider to be "holy." Here's a definition of holy:

Etymology: Middle English, from Old English *hālig*; akin to Old English *hāl* whole — more at [WHOLE](#)

Date: before 12th century

- 1** : exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness
- 2** : [DIVINE](#) <for the Lord our God is holy — Psalms 99:9(Authorized Version)>
- 3** : devoted entirely to the deity or the work of the deity <a holy temple> <holy prophets>
- 4 a** : having a divine quality <holy love> **b** : venerated as or as if sacred <holy scripture> <a holy relic>
- 5** —used as an intensive <this is a holy mess> <he was a holy terror when he drank — Thomas Wolfe> ; often used in combination as a mild oath <holy smoke>

Courtesy of Merriam-Webster dictionary on line.....

Here's also a link to another [definition in the Wikipedia](#), a great online encyclopedia of sorts. You might find it interesting to peruse this link and look at the three definitions of holiness according to Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

What will be even more fun is to have people take this discussion seriously in terms of stories about people they consider holy...no names, please. Hint: if no one says it, I would suggest you mention the thought that anyone in the state of grace (by definition, living in Christ's presence) is holy.....

## **Reflection Two: “On Mission, Many Ministries”**

That quotation from St. Paul (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6) is a great one that certainly does celebrate the many gifts of diverse individuals that bless our churches. Just take a look at your group to remind yourselves of your diversity and maybe take a moment to celebrate your gifts. As a leader you can do a great service to build your little group’s sense of these “gifts” by highlighting the talents of those present. If you’re not sure you have a good knowledge of everyone’s talents, perhaps just a question like “What do you see your gifts to be?” might work too.

I think the remaining paragraphs in this section need very little commentary...they are well done and have good citations. I would just comment that all those mentioned that are part of the ordained ministry have the same requirement of service and also point out that one of the Pope’s titles is “servant of the servants of God.” I say this especially because I know there is sensitivity at times to a certain type of clericalism that wants to separate itself from the rest of the People of God in some manner. I thinking reflection on and observing our priests, pastors, and deacons washing the feet of others at the Holy Thursday service is a good reminder of this command to serve others and also a reminder that we are to serve one another too.

I would also suggest pointing out three facets of the blue box on page 77. Each bishop has the fullness of the priesthood, is the chief shepherd, and is the chief teacher within his diocese. Perhaps now it makes sense when we pray during our prayers of the faithful from time to time for a “good shepherd” for our diocese.

That paragraph says it beautifully, so many faces making up the “tapestry of the Catholic Church” and what an image that calls to mind of scenes from the Vatican you may have witnessed at the election of a Pope, at the vigil for good Pope John as he lay dying, and certainly if you are blessed to visit St. Peters.

## **Sharing Our Faith**

I want to encourage you to allow that first question ample time for discussion. You are aware that this has been declared a year of the priest to pray for more vocations and to pray for all those priests who in their ministry serve us. So I would suggest that you might perhaps get your group to think about the role of the laity in fostering vocations, not just praying for them. I don’t think it is a surprise to anyone that our diocesan “bench strength” is awfully thin. One of the major reasons the diocese is undergoing a large planning process is to try to plan for availability of what we have so often taken for granted, particularly in sacramental ministry.

## **Living the Good News**

From pages 8 through 15 of our Christ the King Parish handbook, you will find listings of the many ways individuals can be of service to our parish. It might be good to have your copy of the Parish Handbook available to mention some of these opportunities for service. Certainly, we could overwhelm our pastor with short hand written notes expressing our appreciation

during this week when we discuss this session. If you wanted to do something small but meaningful, maybe just encourage your group members to thank someone they know or don't know for being an usher, choir member, Eucharistic minister, or performing some other service for us all.

### **Lifting our Hearts**

I think the suggested ending to this session is excellent and follows our suggested format of ending on a note of spontaneous prayer. It might be helpful to invite all to conclude by beginning with the idea that we have so many talents, let us take time one by one to offer our thanksgiving to God for our talents or those we see in others. You might use the example provided or make one up of your own. Then ending on a note of wishing one another peace is a terrific way to end the evening.

Addendum Note: Any feedback you would like to give is most welcome. Please reply to [allaabs1770@gmail.com](mailto:allaabs1770@gmail.com)