



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: The Profession of Faith *I Believe In One Lord Jesus Christ*



Jesus and the Children
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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of study as lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

Last week, we began our discussion concerning the **Profession of Faith** and its meaning to our lives. We mentioned that the **Profession of Faith** we use during the course of the Mass is the Nicene Creed and that as we share it with one another, it is also an opportunity to reflect upon what the profession summarizes and its meaning. We began, of course, with the first statement

which is, “I **believe** in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.” Of course, when we make such a statement, we are asserting it is true, hence, the words, “I **believe**.”

Of course, there are those who do not **believe** in God, and so, we discussed some of the challenges presented in opposition to our **faith**, most often, that some **believe** the results of scientific study proves there is no God simply because the analysis conducted as a result of the method reveals how things within the universe works, that the functions appear to work without the hand of God, therefore, the conclusion is that there is no God. My position is that this is a huge logical leap.

There are also a number of scientists who do not agree with the assertion that scientific study disproves God. There are those, such as Arno Penzias, who received a Nobel prize for his work in physics, who said, “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan.” In other words, we may not see the hand of God as the result of scientific experimentation and study, but given the balanced parameters of physics, and all which enables life, it requires more **faith** to **believe** that all the parameters and narrow boundaries in which life exists were formed through the chaos of accident rather than by the ordered design of an intelligent Creator.

Lee Strobel, a former atheist, made a similar assertion after he embarked on a study of science and **faith**. He stated that “My journey toward God came when I responded to my wife’s conversion and began to look at science in a new way. Instead of ruling out the possibility of a Creator I decided to go wherever the evidence pointed.”

When asked, “Which requires more **faith**, evolution or **faith**?” Lee responded, “I think there’s no question it requires more **faith** to maintain a **belief** in Darwinian evolution today than it does to **believe** in a supernatural Creator. I don’t say that flippantly; I honestly **believe** that’s true. I’ve studied this stuff both when I was doing my original investigation as a skeptic and then as I retraced it for [my] book.” (“Lee Strobel, Is There a Designer,” Phil Callaway, 2012, <http://www.philcallaway.ab.ca/Articles/Interviews/interviewleestrobel1.htm>)

Lee also mentioned Jim Tour, one of the world’s leading nanoscientists, who said, “I build molecules for a living. I can’t begin to tell you how difficult that job is. I stand in awe of God because of what he has done through his creation. My **faith** has been increased through my research. Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from **faith**. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God.”

Today, we turn our discussion to the second statement of the **Profession of Faith**, which is:

“I **believe** in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

Of course, this statement covers quite a bit of ground.

(**Question:** So, let's start with the assertion that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. What reveals this to us?)

(**Observation:** There are those who challenge us by saying there is no proof Jesus ever lived. They extend the challenge by removing the scriptures, saying we cannot use scripture to prove scripture. The other assertion is that if an event did not find its way into a written record, then, the event must have never happened – oh, and scripture does not qualify as part of the written record of history.)

Of course, the historical record of the period was largely oral versus what we now have in terms of the digital age, so this assertion, asking for detailed historical records, places us at a disadvantage. Additionally, many of the fragile records of the time have suffered decay or outright destruction, either accidental or intentional. The critic goes further and asserts that any record provided must come to us outside of Christian hands. According to “*The Washington Post*,” in an article entitled “Did the Historical Jesus Really Exist, the Evidence Just Doesn’t Add Up,” (Raphael Lataster, 18 Dec 2014) one method used to shoot down the historical record in reference to Jesus was to point out that, “the manuscripts were preserved by Christians,” ergo, whatever information they may contain is suspect and could have been tampered with.

Still, history does reveal something and what it does reveal is consistent with the Biblical record. If we enter the words, “Early Historical Documents on Jesus Christ,” into our favorite search engine, we will find a listing of early sources as outlined by such web sites as “New Advent.” Another source that I believe is worth reading can be found at <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/jesus-christ>. In these two online sources, they note that, “The historical documents referring to Christ's life and work may be divided into three classes: pagan sources, Jewish sources, and Christian sources.” The atheist rules out any Christian source as obviously biased, therefore, they stipulate that only secular sources may be offered as proof. While this is the same as declaring that scientists cannot weigh in on science, there are still non-Christian sources which do refer to Jesus, such as the writings of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny the Younger, who are referenced as pagan writers. The Jewish historian, Josephus, is perhaps the most included in the list of early historians or writers who reference the life of Jesus.

Of course, those who do not wish to admit the possibility that there is any true historical validation of Jesus, find means to critique, sow doubt, and subsequently disqualify (by their standards) the early histories and writings. The challenges for anyone examining the issue are the same challenges any historian faces when trying to accurately uncover and interpret history through small snippets of evidence which have survived from a period approximately 2000 years ago. This brings to mind the statement by Saint Thomas Aquinas, “To one who has **faith**,

no explanation is necessary. To one without **faith**, no explanation is possible.”

If you remember from last week, I mentioned that those who do not believe in God have **faith**, but their **faith** is that God does not exist. The same can be said for His only begotten Son. I also mentioned that their **beliefs** are most often based upon study, observations, or experiments they did not do themselves, hence why their **disbelief** is a matter of personal **faith**. Remember also, the segment I mentioned from article 26 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is “**Faith** is man’s response to God.”

We, as Catholics, face a similar dilemma, in that our **faith** is based largely upon what we may have learned from parents, loved ones, friends, as well as total strangers. We did not live at the time Jesus walked among us, therefore, since we are not eye-witnesses, our understanding and **belief** is based upon what has survived through the generations to our present time. What we profess from this understanding, is our response to God.

(**Question:** I also mentioned last time that our personal answer to the question, while based on **faith** in the experience of what others relate to us, does have some basis of confirmation through our personal experience. In what ways might we experience a personal relationship with Jesus?)

(CCC: 53) The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously “by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other” and shed light on each other. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father’s pleasure.

(**Question:** As we examine our **faith** in the Son, our **belief** must first begin with the Father. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church relates, “God communicates himself to man gradually.” What does this statement mean to us as we reflect on our **faith**?)

(**Question:** CCC: 53 continues by saying, “He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. What is meant by the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ and what meaning should this have to our **faith**?)

(**Question:** CCC: 53 concludes with a reference to St. Irenaeus of Lyons who references that, “... the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God...” This thought of God and man becoming accustomed to one another, what does this imply to us?)

In Hebrews 1:1-4, we are told: “*1 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; 2 in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he*

made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, 3 who is the resplendence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

(Question: As we reflect upon this scripture, how does it relate to the **Profession of Faith**?)

(CCC: 65) “*In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.*” Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father’s one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. *In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one.* St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2: In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word—and he has no more to say . . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

(Question: This article tells us we should expect no further revelation other than what we received through the Son. Why is it that we need look no further than the example and teaching of Jesus?)

1 *In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.*
2 *He was in the beginning with God.*
3 *All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be
4 through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;*
5 *the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.*
(John 1:1-5)

(Question: As we reflect upon the scripture of John 1:1-5, how does this align with the **Profession of Faith**?)

9 *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*
10 *He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.*
11 *He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.*
12 *But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those
who believe in his name,*
13 *who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s*

decision but of God.

*14 And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.*
(John 1:9-14)

(CCC: 66) “The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian **faith** gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

(Question: As we reflect upon the statement, “even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian **faith** gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries?” What does this mean and what does it mean to the exercise of our **faith**?)

Quotes:

“We always find that those who walked closest to Christ were those who had to bear the greatest trials.” – St. Teresa of Avila

“Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.” – St. Ignatius of Antioch

“Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort me and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.” – St. Patrick

“Christ said, “I am the Truth”; he did not say “I am the custom.” – St. Toribio

“I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible.” – St. Ignatius of Antioch

Final Thoughts:

During the course of our discussion, we mentioned some of the challenges which the documentation of history presents to us. If we are not there to witness an event, then, we are dependent upon what others may or may not observe in the same fashion as a jury must consider evidence and witnesses from which to render a verdict. As that evidence is presented to us, we rarely accept it based solely on its presentation, rather, we have some mechanism by which we attempt to validate its truth and give weight as to what it reveals to us. Our verdict is our **faith** and what we **believe** is our answer to God as He seeks for us to have a relationship

with Him.

If we **believe** God exists and we **believe** in His only Son, then, it is incumbent upon us to endeavor to learn about that existence and the meaning of God to our lives. This endeavor is not just an academic pursuit so we may argue and philosophize, it is a matter of life and for what our life prepares us. If we truly **believe** in God, we must also heed His Word. We cannot heed it if we do not know it, therefore, St Jerome is quite correct when he says, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

If this is what we **believe**, then, let us continue to learn. Let us seek what God gradually reveals to us. Let us approach Him in both adoration and prayer so He may guide us in how we may lead our lives in love of Him and one another.

Wrap Up: Well, our hour is gone once more. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: The Profession of Faith – The Life, Death and Resurrection.