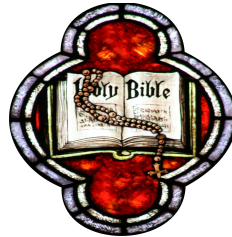




The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Study and Discernment of Scripture
Part I



Public Domain

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 represent a rather broad background in catechesis gained in support of various parishes as well as a variety of age and spiritual interest groups. So, welcome to our panelists as well as to 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:

As we concluded our series on the **Profession of Faith**, which we conducted over a period of fourteen weeks, I mentioned that this may seem like a long time to discuss a creed which only requires a little more than a minute to profess. I also mentioned that during the course of that 14 week discussion, we only scratched the surface of the mysteries, wisdom, and hope which our profession of faith contains, which reveals that what we may summarize in a minute represents a lifetime journey of learning, reflection, contemplation, and living.

I posed that we might wonder how are we to learn about all of this and that the first place to begin is attendance at Mass where our clergy helps to bring scripture into our present day as we reflect upon and celebrate our Savior and Redeemer as well as give glory and praise to our God. The reason for this should be clear from our six part discussion where we conducted a scriptural walk through the Mass, and even then, we only scratched the surface of the fullness of faith upon which we reflect and celebrate during the course of a single Mass.

While the Mass opens a significant part of our faith to us, I mentioned that we should also spend time in scripture so we may receive what it reveals, but as we have already discussed, that can be a daunting task. So, today, we will begin a discussion as to how we may approach, study and learn the truth of God's Holy Word.

Before we get into some tips about the study of scripture, though, I must address some of the criticisms of the Catholic faith, which is that we do not use the Bible. I encounter this criticism in various forms, but it is not true.

For example, a few years ago, someone came to my door and left me a copy of a magazine entitled, "Awake." In it, was an article about a gentleman by the name of Antonio Della Gatta. The title of the article was, "Why a Priest Left His Church." ("Awake," Feb 2015, pg 12). The article begins:

"AFTER studying in Rome for nine years, Antonio Della Gatta was ordained as a priest in 1969. Later, he served as the rector, or head, of a seminary near Naples, Italy. While there, after much study and meditation, he concluded that the Catholic religion is not based on the Bible."

Later in the article, Antonio is asked if his training involved any Bible study. His answer was:

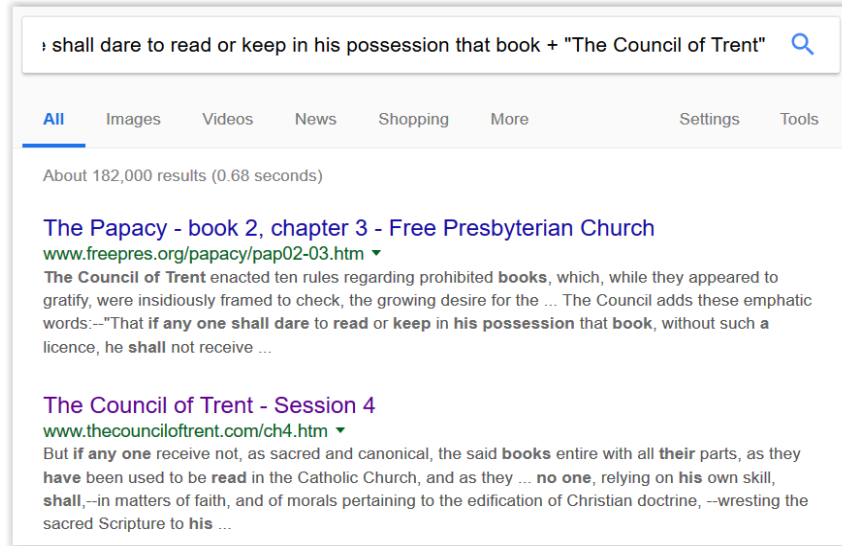
"Not really...When I was 18, I went to Rome to study in the pontifical universities, which are directly under the pope's authority. I studied Latin, Greek, history, philosophy, psychology, and theology. Although we recited verses from the Bible and heard Bible reading in Sunday sermons, we did not actually study the Bible."

(Question 1: When I read this, I thought to myself, "A priest said this?" Why do you think I would be skeptical about such a statement being attributed to a priest of the Catholic Church?)

Another criticism is that the Church prohibits Catholics from reading the Bible. As proof, they cite The Council of Trent. One such article states:

The Council of Trent (1545-1564) placed the Bible on its list of prohibited books, and forbade any person to read the Bible without a license from a Roman Catholic bishop or inquisitor. The Council added these words: "That if any one shall dare to read or keep in his possession that book, without such a license, he shall not receive absolution till he has given it up to his ordinary."(Excerpted from an article by David Cloud entitled, "The KJV and the Latin Vulgate")

I wanted to find the full context, so, I took a portion of the words cited and did an Internet search. What I found, was the following:



(**Note:** The words were in fact there, but just not exactly as cited. I noticed with interest how the words appeared in the search results. The search results show in bold the words which match the search criteria, but the exact quote was not in the Council of Trent decrees. The result was similar to taking a selection of text, finding the words you want, then, presenting them in a fashion that they appear to say what you want them to say. This selective editing, however, leaves out essential words and context which ends up changing the whole meaning.)

(From the Second Decree - <http://thecounciloftrent.com/ch4.htm>)

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.

And wishing, as is just, to impose a restraint, in this matter, also on printers, who now without restraint,--thinking, that is, that whatsoever they please is allowed them,--print, without the license of ecclesiastical superiors, the said books of sacred Scripture, and the notes and comments upon them of all persons indifferently, with the press oftentimes unnamed, often even fictitious, and what is more grievous still, without the author's name; and also keep for indiscriminate sale books of this kind printed elsewhere; (this Synod) ordains and decrees, that, henceforth, the sacred Scripture, and especially the said old and vulgate edition, be printed in the most correct manner possible; and that it shall not be lawful for any one to print, or cause to be printed, any books whatever, on sacred matters, without the name of the author; nor to sell them in future, or even to keep

them, unless they shall have been first examined, and approved of, by the Ordinary; under pain of the anathema and fine imposed in a canon of the last Council of Lateran: and, if they be Regulars, besides this examination and approval, they shall be bound to obtain a license also from their own superiors, who shall have examined the books according to the form of their own statutes. As to those who lend, or circulate them in manuscript, without their having been first examined, and approved of, they shall be subjected to the same penalties as printers: and they who shall have them in their possession or shall read them, shall, unless they discover the authors, be themselves regarded as the authors. And the said approbation of books of this kind shall be given in writing; and for this end it shall appear authentically at the beginning of the book, whether the book be written, or printed; and all this, that is, both the approbation and the examination, shall be done gratis, that so what ought to be approved, may be approved, and what ought to be condemned, may be condemned.”

(Question 2: As I summarize this selection from the second decree of the Council of Trent, it does not prohibit the reading of the Bible, rather, it prohibits the use of unapproved translations. It also provides a means by which approved translations are indicated and that such examination to determine the authenticity and accuracy of a given translation will be done for free so that what should be approved is approved.

This approval we know today as the *Nihil Obstat* (nothing stands in the way) and *Imprimatur* (it may be printed). By looking for the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* at the beginning of a Bible or commentary, we can be assured of the examination such that heresies are not contained in either the translation of the supporting text such as appendixes and footnotes.

Why do we think the Catholic Church would attempt to restrict unapproved translations of the Bible and commentaries?)

[From the Introduction to the Bible, The Family Rosary Commemorative Edition of the Catholic Bible, Imprimatur, Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago, 4 June 1953] “Catholics are allowed to read and to keep only those translations of the Holy Bible which are issued with annotations and with the approval of the pope or of a bishop. Since the Church is the guardian of the truths of faith, it must protect its members from versions of the Bible that have been truncated by those who do not accept the full truth as revealed in the Scriptures...Moreover, the church must see to it that the versions read by its members are accurate translations of the original and that the notes and explanations appended to the text are free from errors that would corrupt the faith.”

(Question 3: In this quote from the “Introduction to the Bible,” it is clear the laity are allowed to keep and read the Bible, but there are restrictions. What is the nature of these restrictions?)

(CCC: 131) “And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life.” Hence “access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful.”

(CCC: 133) The Church “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,’ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.’”

(Question 4: Today, it seems natural to spend time reading scripture, but there are challenges. What do we think the challenges were for the early church and how might the church address those challenges?)

(Question 5: In our day of literacy, we also face challenges in reading scripture. What are some of the challenges we should consider as we approach the reading of scripture?)

Biblical Context Important to Understanding and Comprehension:

1. Positional (within the body of His Word)
2. Historical (timeline)
3. Cultural (social norms)
4. Linguistic (translations and idioms)
5. Spiritual (God's intent vs letter of the law)

(Question 6: Positional context is related to where scripture appears in the Bible and what is before and after a given selection. Why do we think positional context is important?)

(Question 7: Historical context is related to what happens before, during, and after a given event or selection of the Bible. Why do we think historical context is important?)

(Question 8: Cultural context is related to the social norms of the times which scripture describes. Why do we think cultural context is important?)

(Question 9: Linguistic context is related to the common understanding of the language used at the time the scripture was written as well as the language to which the scripture is translated and when it was translated. Why do we think linguistic context is important?)

(Question 10: Spiritual context is related to the intent of God versus the ideologies of people. Why do we think spiritual context is important?)

Quotes:

Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.
– *Saint Jerome* (347 – 420)

The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old is made accessible by the New.
– *Saint Augustine* (354-430)

The Old Testament is like a radio with its hidden voice announcing the One to come. The New Testament is like a television because the Word became both audible and visible.
– *Archbishop Fulton Sheen* (1895-1979)

Final Thoughts:

Today, we addressed some criticisms directed against the Catholic Church, but as we examine history, we see those criticisms are based on either misinformation, misinterpretation, or outright deception by some individuals. From both the Catechism and examination of historical documents of the church, we see that scripture and the reading of scripture is important to our faith, but there are some issues.

In our discussion, we opened the door to some of the challenges we face towards reading and comprehending the Bible. We also discussed the importance of understanding context towards accurate understanding. Next time, we will go deeper into the elements of context and what is available to us to enable our ability to discern what God communicates to us and asks of us through His holy Word.

Wrap Up: Well, once more, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our discussion as to the study and discernment of scripture.

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 Study and Discernment of Scripture – Part II