



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Sword of the Spirit



Blessed are the Merciful
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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 discernment and study to become 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.

Presentation:

During our first five episodes, we began a discussion as to the six components of the Armor of God. As a reminder, St. Paul listed these components in Ephesians 6:10-18. In summary, they are:

The belt of truth
The breastplate of righteousness
The sandals of peace

The shield of faith
The helmet of salvation
The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Last week we discussed the **helmet of salvation**. Today, we will discuss the sixth component of the armor of God, which is **The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**.

St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.” If we are to experience the fullness of faith, then, we must study **His Word** and endeavor to comprehend the depth of blessings we receive through the ultimate wisdom of God. The study of **His Word** is not an easy task, for it requires time, diligence, and help.

If we do not open our day to spend time with **His Word**, we leave its wisdom locked within the **words** we do not read or upon which we do not contemplate and reflect. If we are not diligent in our efforts, we will not be able to uncover the depths of its meaning. If we do not have help, then, we limit ourselves in comprehension. If we turn to one another, without the help of God, then, how are we to discern bias, deception, or misinterpretation from the **truth** God seeks to reveal to us?

Keeping this in mind, let's begin our discussion with the following question:

What is the **Word** of God and what is its meaning to us?

Opening Question?

Scripture:

Old Testament:

*8 Ezra read clearly from the book of the **law of God**, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read. 9 Then Nehemiah, that is, the governor, and Ezra the priest-scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not lament, do not weep!”—for all the people were weeping as they heard the **words of the law**. 10 He continued: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD is your strength!” 11 And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Silence! Today is holy, do not be saddened.” 12 Then all the people began to eat and drink, to distribute portions, and to celebrate with great joy, for they understood the words that had been explained to them. (Nehemiah 8:8-12)*

(Question: Ezra is a priest-scribe in the line of genealogy which traces back to Aaron, the brother of Moses. As a priest in the line of those anointed by God, Ezra is responsible for sharing the **Word of God** so that all who hear may understand. Part of the role of a priest is as teacher of the flock in matters relating to God. In what ways do our priests seek to teach us the Holy Word of God? Why is this important to us?)

20 Ah! Those who call evil good, and good evil,

*who change darkness to light, and light into darkness,
who change bitter to sweet, and sweet into bitter!*

21 *Ah! Those who are wise in their own eyes,
prudent in their own view!*

22 *Ah! Those who are champions at drinking wine,
masters at mixing drink!*

23 *Those who acquit the guilty for bribes,
and deprive the innocent of justice!*

24 *Therefore, as the tongue of fire licks up stubble,
as dry grass shrivels in the flame,*

*Their root shall rot
and their blossom scatter like dust;*

*For they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of hosts,
and scorned the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

(Isaiah 5:20-24)

1 *Ah! Rebellious children,
oracle of the LORD,
Who carry out a plan that is not mine,
who make an alliance I did not inspire,
thus adding sin upon sin; (Isaiah 30:1)*

.....
8 *Now come, write it on a tablet they can keep,
inscribe it on a scroll;
That in time to come it may be
an eternal witness.*

9 *For this is a rebellious people,
deceitful children,
Children who refuse*

*to listen to the instruction of the LORD;
10 Who say to the seers, "Do not see";
to the prophets, "Do not prophesy truth for us;
speak smooth things to us, see visions that deceive!"*

11 *Turn aside from the way! Get out of the path!
Let us hear no more
of the Holy One of Israel!"*

12 *Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel:
Because you reject this word,
And put your trust in oppression and deceit,
and depend on them,*

13 *This iniquity of yours shall be
like a descending rift*

*Bulging out in a high wall
whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant,*

14 *Crashing like a potter's jar
smashed beyond rescue,*

And among its fragments cannot be found

*a sherd to scoop fire from the hearth
or dip water from the cistern.*
15 For thus said the Lord GOD,
the Holy One of Israel:

*By waiting and by calm you shall be saved,
in quiet and in trust shall be your strength.
But this you did not will.*

(Isaiah 30:8-15)

(Question: The scripture of Isaiah 30 reveals the displeasure of God in that the people trusted in an alliance of the world rather than the hand and Word of God. It concludes with “*But this you did not will.*” It also reflects the self-delusion of the people as they seek **prophecy** to their liking rather than the **truth**. Can we reflect upon any modern day similarities where we prefer **words** of deceit and placation over **words** of **truth**?)

*Rise up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights;
look to the east and see your children
Gathered from east to west
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that they are remembered by God.*

(Baruch 5:5)

(Question: God knows the times the people will turn from Him, but it is the splendor of His **Word** through which they discover their thirst for His ways, the ways of love. If we seek to comprehend the depths of the blessings of His **Word**, we will rejoice in the wisdom we may receive and the blessings of love His **Word** calls us to share. In what ways does His **Word** speak to us?)

New Testament

36 *What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? 37 What could one give in exchange for his life? 38 Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.*” (Mark 8:36-38)

(Question: Our endeavors are often focused upon this world. Indeed, we need to work for our daily survival if we are to be healthy for the work to which He calls us, but too often our endeavors are for what will pass to dust in this world as opposed to what will follow us to the next. In what ways do we set the priorities of our life and what is the meaning of His **Word** to our choices?)

27 Indeed they gathered in this city against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do what your hand and [your] will had long ago planned to take place. 29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and enable your servants to speak your word with all boldness, 30 as you stretch forth [your] hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 *As they prayed, the place where they were*

gathered shook, and they were all filled with the **holy Spirit** and continued to speak the **word of God** with boldness. (Acts 4:27-31)

(**Question:** Through the **holy Spirit**, the disciples of Jesus were emboldened to speak the **Word of God**. In what ways does **His Word** embolden us? In what ways does the **Holy Spirit** guide us?)

13 In him you also, who have heard the **word of truth**, the gospel of your **salvation**, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised **holy Spirit**, 14 which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

(**Question:** If we reflect upon these phrases; The **word of truth**, the gospel of our **salvation**, sealed by the **holy Spirit**; what relationships do we see?)

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly 3 calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, 4 knowing, brothers loved by God, how you were chosen. 5 For **our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit and [with] much conviction.** You know what sort of people we were [among] you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the **word** in great affliction, with joy from the **holy Spirit**, 7 so that you became a model for all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 **For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth not only in Macedonia and [in] Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.** 9 For they themselves openly declare about us what sort of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 10 and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from [the] dead, **Jesus, who delivers us from the coming wrath.** (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10)

(**Question:** Consider the words, “*For from you the **word of the Lord** has sounded forth in every place your faith in God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.*” It is not always what we say, but what we do which leaves the most lasting impression. Words carry meaning, but actions produce results. In what ways do our actions share **His holy Word**?)

- 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)

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 1:14)

(**Question:** As the **Word** made flesh [the only begotten Son of God] entered into the world, then, our relationship with Jesus becomes part of our comprehension of the **Word**. In what ways do we increase our relationship with Jesus through the study of His holy **Word**?)

Catechism:

1100 The **Word** of God. The **Holy Spirit** first recalls the meaning of the **salvation** event to the liturgical assembly by giving life to the **Word of God**, which is proclaimed so that it may be received and lived: In the celebration of the liturgy, **Sacred Scripture** is extremely important. From it come the lessons that are read and explained in the homily and the psalms that are sung. It is from the **Scriptures** that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and their force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning.

1088 “To accomplish so great a work”—the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation—“**Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations**. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,’ but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes. **He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church**. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised ‘where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.’”

1358 We must therefore consider the Eucharist as: — thanksgiving and praise to the Father; — the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his Body; — the presence of Christ by the power of **his word** and of **his Spirit**.

(**Question:** During the course of the Mass, we reflect upon or celebrate over 100 elements of **scripture**. As we attend Mass, we have the opportunity to both learn and celebrate. Attending Mass is central to our exercise of faith and our learning of **His Word**. In what other ways may we be exposed to **His Word** such that we may prepare ourselves to carry and wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God**?)

CCC: 2653 The Church “forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (Phil 3:8) by frequent **reading** of the **divine Scriptures**. . . . Let them remember, however, that **prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture**, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For

‘we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.’”⁴

(Question: One of the criticisms of Catholicism is the myth that Catholics are instructed to not read the **Bible**. It is true that within our church history, there were isolated edicts restricting the reading of **scripture** by the laity, but these restrictions were in relation to unapproved translations or reading and relying solely on one's own wisdom for comprehension, which often becomes the source for the introduction of heresies. It is clear, though, that the position of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is that the reading of **scripture** is an essential part of the life of the **faithful** and their relationship with God. How should we proceed with the reading of **scripture** such that we are able to strengthen our comprehension of what God seeks to communicate to us?)

Quotes:

If you believe what you like in the **gospels**, and reject what you don't like, it is not the **gospel** you believe, but yourself. (St. Augustine)

The Holy **Bible** is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it we see our inner face. From the **Scriptures** we can learn our **spiritual** deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection. (Pope Saint Gregory)

The **Bible** is a **letter** from Almighty God to His creatures. (Pope Saint Gregory)

Seek by **reading** and you will find by meditating. Knock by praying, and it will be opened to you in contemplation. (Saint John of the Cross)

Points for discussion:

What is the importance of scripture to the understanding of our faith?

How do we protect ourselves from the errors caused by taking His Word out of context?

How may we use the knowledge of His Word in the defense of our faith?

Final Thoughts:

Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan. Let's consider the following scripture.

*1 Then Jesus was led by the **Spirit** into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. 3 The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." 4 He said in reply, "It is **written**:*

*'One does not live by bread alone, but by every **word** that comes forth from the mouth of God.'*

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written:

‘He will command his angels concerning you’
and ‘with their hands they will support you,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

7 Jesus answered him, “Again it is **written**, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’”
8 Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, 9 and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.” 10 At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is **written**:

‘The Lord, your God, shall you worship
and him alone shall you serve.’”

11 Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.
(Matthew 4:1-11)

Perhaps we see in this scripture how the Word of God is like a sword. A sword may be used to defend and attack. It may be used to deflect blows from an opponent as well as to strike. Satan attempted to strike by twisting scripture to achieve the purpose of his temptations, but Jesus, the Word made flesh, both defended and struck with **truth** until Satan left Him. Of course, we expect the Word made flesh to be able to speak in truth, but what about our use of scripture? Can we hope to have the same knowledge as Jesus? Are we able to wield the sword of the Spirit with the skill and strength of Jesus?

If we are honest, we face many challenges in our ability to absorb and comprehend the vast meaning of **His Word**. Our hope does not come from becoming wise in our own eyes, but in the wisdom God seeks to plant within our hearts. As Satan swirls about us to confuse us and deceive us to his ends, we should remember, we are not in the fight alone. Jesus said at the Last Supper:

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, 17 the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:15-18)

Jesus continued:

“**Whoever loves me will keep my word**, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. 24 **Whoever does not love me does not keep my words**; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. (John 14:23-24)

Of course, Satan will try to deceive and confuse us, just as he was able to deceive the first couple of the garden. If we do not know **His holy Word**, we leave ourselves vulnerable to the one who seduces us to evil and seeks to separate us from our Creator. We face many challenges in our understanding and comprehension, but Jesus has not left us alone.

26 The Advocate, the **holy Spirit** that the Father will send in my name—**he will teach you**

everything and remind you of all that [I] told you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.
(John 14:26-27)

Let us, then, ask in prayer for the **Holy Spirit** to guide us in **truth**, wisdom, and understanding of the holy **Word of God** so that we may not only defend our **faith**, but drive evil away from us so we may live in **peace** and so we may receive the **salvation** which is ours through the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

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 pick up our discussion with “**The Armor of God In Our Lives.**”

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 share the blessings of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and Your holy 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 Armor of God In Our Lives**