COURSE OUTLINE

Blessed Are You Among Women (Dogma)

Principal Guide: Faith + Doctrine = True Devotion of Mary

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What touched your heart the most from this week's presentation and why it affected you as it did?

THE HAIL HOLY QUEEN

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

LECTURE 1: THEOLOGY – FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

A. THE CHALLENGE FOR PROTESTANTS

a. Mary is a major obstacle for many Protestants due to Church dogma concerning her.
b. Mediator vs Intercessor
    i. Protestants believe Catholics view Mary as a mediator – misperception.
    ii. Catholics agree with Protestants that there is only one mediator – Jesus Christ!
    iii. Catholics do not view Mary as a mediator, but rather as an intercessor. She joins her prayers with ours and intercedes on our behalf before her Son.
c. Perpetual Virginity (see notes below)
d. Immaculate Conception (Mary conceived without sin)
    i. Protestants have a different understanding of Grace from Catholics. Protestant view grace as being free and unmerited like Catholics, but they also view grace as operating externally upon the human person. Grace acts as a cloak that covers over the corruption of human nature, making the person acceptable to God, but underneath the remnants of sin always cling to us.
    ii. The Catholic understanding is that Grace is God's divine life, which he freely shares with us. Sanctifying grace is received through the sacraments and acts ***within*** us to conform our will to God's holy will. We cooperate with Grace in God's efforts to make us holy.
    iii. The difficulty for Protestants is understanding how Mary could be preserved free from sin prior to Jesus' redemptive act on the cross due to their different understanding of grace.
e. Assumption of Mary
    i. Most Protestants accept the Assumption of Mary in some fashion, but most do not consider it an article of faith, viewing it to be of no benefit to others.
f. Adoring Mary vs. Venerating Mary

i. Catholic devotion to Mary gives Protestants the impression that we adore Mary when adoration is reserved for God alone. Sometimes our devotion to Mary can obscure or eclipse our adoration of God when popular piety is carried to an extreme (e.g., praying the Rosary during Mass)
ii. Catholics only adore God. We venerate Mary. We hold her in a position of high honor due to her privileged role as the Mother of God, her preeminent role as Mother of the Church and Model of Discipleship.

B. MARIAN DOGMAS

a. A dogma is a truth proclaimed infallibly by the Church's Magisterium as being contained in the Deposit of Revelation
   i. A divinely revealed truth rooted in Scripture and Sacred Tradition
   ii. Can be explicit (e.g., found in Scripture) or Implicit (e.g., Mary as the New Eve)
   iii. It is a growth in understanding moving toward fullness of truth
   iv. Baptized Catholics are obligated to believe dogmas *(Act of Faith)*.
b. Marian Dogmas are always linked with Christ. They help us to understand the nature of Christ.
   i. Mary, Mother of God (Theotokos) – linked to Christ's Incarnation
   ii. Mary, Ever Virgin – linked to Christ's Incarnation
   iii. Immaculate Conception of Mary – linked to Christ's Redemption
   iv. Assumption of Mary – linked to the fullness of Christ's Redemption/Eschatology (death, heaven, hell, purgatory)

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What are some questions you have about the dogmas of Mary?

LECTURE 2: THE FOUR MARIAN DOGMAS – MOTHER OF GOD & EVER-VIRGIN

A. MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

a. **THEOTOKOS VS. CHRISTOTOKOS (God-Bearer vs. Christ-Bearer)**
   i. Developed in response to heresies regarding the identity of Christ Jesus.
      1. Arianism denied Jesus' divine nature
      2. Docetism denied Jesus' human nature
   ii. Council of Ephesus in 431 AD defined the two natures of Jesus
      1. Jesus is a Divine Person with two natures (human and divine); Jesus is fully human and fully divine.
      2. Rational for Mary as Theotokos: You do not give birth to a Nature. You give birth to a Person. To say that Mary is merely the mother of Jesus' human nature is to deny his divine nature because they are inseparable. Jesus is a Divine Person – He is God!
b. **MARY, EVER-VIRGIN**
   i. The question of Mary's perpetual virginity was not something that concerned New-Testament writers.
   ii. Mary's virginity makes it clear that salvation is brought about through God's initiative, not ours.

iii. Apocryphal Writings (writings that were deemed to NOT be divinely inspired and omitted from the Bible; also a reference to 7 books in the Catholic Bible that are omitted from the Protestant Bible)

iv. Protoevangelium of James & the Gospel of Thomas' infancy narratives
   1. Joseph is an older widower with children who marries Mary and whose children from his previous marriage become Jesus' stepbrothers and stepsisters.

v. Sacred Scripture
   1. References to "brothers (and sisters) of the Lord"
      a. Evangelists use the Greek word, Adelphos, which has several meanings:
         i. Literal & biological blood relationship – this position is held by most Protestants
         ii. Kinship
            1. Original interpretation up to the Reformation
            2. Catholics = cousins (Jerome's translation into Latin)
            3. Anglicans = Joseph's children/stepbrothers and stepsisters
         iii. Spiritual / Extended Relationship – e.g., children of God, or the family friend who is always called "Aunt"
   2. Matthew 1:25 – He [Joseph] had no relations with her ***until*** she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.
      a. The Greek word translated "until" does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it. It's ambiguous.

vi. Given the ambiguity of Sacred Scripture we must turn then to Sacred Tradition – What did the early Church Father teach? How did they interpret Scripture?
   1. In the year AD 383, St. Jerome writes that St. Ignatius (100 AD), St. Polycarp (150 AD), St. Justin Martyr (160 AD), and St. Irenaeus (200 AD) all "held these same views" of Mary's perpetual virginity and "wrote volumes replete with wisdom" (in his The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary: Against Helvidius, section 19). However, no writings from these 4 men survived that unambiguously identifies their belief in this doctrine, but we assume Jerome had access to some of their many works that did not survive until the modern day.
   2. In response to the heresy of the Antidicomarites (opponents of Mary who denied her perpetual Virginity – 200 to 400 AD) there is an explosion of references to the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity in the 4th century.
   3. The Church formally proclaims Mary's perpetual virginity at the 2nd Council of Constantinople in 553 AD. The Council addressed the two natures of Jesus.
   4. The Lateran Synod of 649 AD emphasized the threefold character of her perpetual virginity
      a. Mary was a virgin in her conception of Jesus
      b. Mary was a virgin in giving birth to Jesus
      c. Mary remained a virgin after Jesus' birth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do the dogmas of Mary, Mother of God, and Mary Ever-Virgin reveal about Christ Jesus?

If God chose to enter the world through Mary's yes, what does that say about how Christ desires to come into the world today – especially through you in your role as a catechist?

LECTURE 3: FOUR MARIAN DOGMAS – THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

A. **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

a. Proclaimed on December 8, 1854

b. We celebrate what God did in Mary!

i. "Full of [sanctifying] grace" / "The radically redeemed" – Karl Rahner, Theologian

c. *Through the centuries the Church became ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. (CCC #491)*

d. "*In anticipation that she was to bear the Son of God, Mary was preserved from the time of her conception from Original Sin." (USCCA, p. 143)*

e. Biblical Foundations (Implicit)

i. Genesis 3:15 – "woman" understood as a reference to Mary (see John 2 & 19, Rev)

ii. Song of Songs 4:7 – "without blemish"

iii. Luke 1:28 – "Hail, full of grace"

1. This isn't merely acknowledgment of a quality Mary possesses, but a title, a new name, that is bestowed upon Mary which acknowledges her identity & mission.
2. Ke***chari***tomene – unmerited gift, favor, grace
    a. The word means having received grace and having been changed/transformed internally by grace that is ongoing

f. Early Church

i. New Eve Typology (Gen 3:15)

ii. St. Ambrose (d. 379) noted that Mary was "free from all stain of sin.

g. Middle Ages

i. *"God prepares and disposes those whom he has chosen for a special purpose in such a way as to make them capable of performing that for which he selected them…"* (St. Thomas Aquinas)

ii. Mary was preserved from sin from the moment of her conception and placed in right relationship with God. This is a singular grace achieved through the merit of Jesus, as the Word of God, at the first moment of her existence.

h. Apparitions

i. 1830 – Mary appears to St. Catherine Laboure and asks that a Medallion be made that includes the words, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

ii. 1858 – Mary identifies herself to St. Bernadette as "I am the Immaculate Conception"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Mary, full of grace, cooperated with God's divine life within her to be a model of holiness and hope for redemption. How might you, who have been filled with grace in Baptism, cooperate with God's divine life within you to be a model of holiness for others?

LECTURE 4: FOUR MARIAN DOGMAS – THE ASSUMPTION

A. Proclaimed on November 1, 1950 by Pope Pius XII
   a. "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." (Document: *Most Bountiful God*)
B. Historical Context (Post World War II and end of Church's Marian Era)
   a. The intellectual assault on the dignity of the human person bore abundant fruit in the twentieth century
   b. By defining this dogma the Church hoped that the faithful would recognize more clearly the value of human life and our eternal destiny (resurrection)
   c. Destiny of Body and Soul…Assumption reaffirms the importance of the human person as an embodied person/value of the flesh
C. Tradition
   a. By the 4th century the was the feast of the Falling Asleep of Mary; the Dormition of Mary – Later named the Assumption
   b. + Middle Ages: Rosary /Glorious Mysteries
      i. Assumption
      ii. Mary crowned Queen of Heaven
   c. Hail Holy Queen (Queenship/maternal intercession)

SESSION 2 ASSIGNMENT

- Prayer:
  - Take additional time to contemplate and pray more fully on the reflection questions from the Contemplation portion on the Lectio Divina handout.
  - Complete the Living Word activity during the week.
- Action:
  - Bring your favorite Marian picture, statue, card, activity that you would like to share with the class.
- Prepare:
  - Bring the handout and Lectio Divina for Session 3 to class. Use the QR code to access the material or go to: https://phillyocf.org/scf-course-materials/

CLOSING PRAYER

A 6th Century Byzantine Prayer to Mary

Grace-filled, unspotted, God-bearing Virgin,
holy your womb: Emmanuel lay in it.
You fed at your breast the food of the world.
What praise can reach you, what glory touch you?
Hail, God's mother, delight of the angels;
hail, full of grace, foretold by the prophets' preaching.
The Lord is with you.
The child you bore has saved the world. Amen.