

*IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD .....*

*LIVING LIFE IN THE LIGHT AND LOVE OF CHRIST!*

A SIX WEEK STUDY OF JOHN 1:1-18

Presented by Susan Castille

Commentary by Cindy Habetz

Edited by Rosie Zehnder

Assembled/Formatted/Printed by Jill Ardoin

With Special Thanks To  
*Jalyne Dupre* For Her Tireless Service  
To The Lord!



## PROLOGUE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the Light so that all might believe through Him. He was not the Light, but came to testify to the Light. The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through Him, but the world did not know Him. He came to what was His own, but His own people did not accept Him. But to those who did accept Him, He gave power to become children of God; to those who believe in His name who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision, but of God. And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us; and we saw His glory, the glory of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to Him and cried out saying, “This is He of Whom I said, ‘The One Who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because He existed before me.’” From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For while the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, Who is at the Father’s side, has revealed Him.”

John 1:1-18

New American Bible Translation

## NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. 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. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, Who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## “LIVING LIFE IN THE LIGHT AND LOVE OF CHRIST”

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1 ~ WORD OF GOD ~ JOHN 1:1-2 “Who is God?”	Page 6
WEEK 2 ~ CREATION: ORIGIN OF LIFE ~ JOHN 1:3-4 “Where do I come from?”	Page 16
WEEK 3 ~ LIFE AS LIGHT OF GOD JOHN ~ 1:5-9 “What am I doing here?” Part 1	Page 24
WEEK 4 ~ LIFE AS CHILDREN OF GOD ~ JOHN 1:10-13 “What am I doing here?’ Part 2	Page 32
WEEK 5 ~ GLORY OF GOD ~ JOHN 1:14 “Where am I going?”	Page 42
WEEK 6 ~ LIFE IN GRACE AND TRUTH ~ JOHN 1:15-18 “How do I get there?”	Page 52



## WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION ON LOGOS

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”*

*John 1:1-2*

*“I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.”*

*Nicene Creed*

What was a person to do? The time was late in the first century AD. The place was Ephesus, in what is modern Turkey. An elderly man named John tried to determine the best way to do what God asks of him - to present the indescribable, the inscrutable truth of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, to a group of Gentiles who knew nothing of the Jewish Messiah. Furthermore, John wanted to introduce the astonishing idea that God would become a man, a part of His creation in order to demonstrate in an understandable way how much He loves them!

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life”*

*John 3:16*

John had no less a goal than to show his Gentile brothers and sisters a religion (Christianity) like no one had ever known. It was a religion that would satisfactorily answer the most basic question people tend to ask concerning God, as well as his own life, actions, and fate. In other words, John wants to show what Christianity offers in answer to the really important questions of life: “Who is God?” “Where do I come from?” “What am I doing here?” “Where am I going?” “How can I get there?” These are questions we still ask, aren’t they? Our Christian faith gives us the answers to all those questions if we will take the time and put forth the effort to look

at them and John's Prologue pretty much lays them out for us. That is why this small section (18 verses) of John's Gospel called the Prologue is considered to include some of the most important verses in the whole Bible! And that is why we will spend the next few weeks immersed in its beautiful message. It is still as fresh and relevant today as it was when John sat down to write.

The apostle John faced a difficult task. He was writing to a mostly Gentile audience describing a Jewish Messiah. Before John wrote his gospel, if a Greek (Gentile) wanted to learn about Jesus or wanted to understand the Christian faith, he could read the writings of St. Matthew, who was also an apostle of Jesus and had written earlier than John did. The first thing a reader would find in Matthew's writings was:

*"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham."*

*Matthew 1:1*

Problem was these Greek Christians didn't know who David or Abraham were, had never heard of a Messiah, and had no idea what that was or what it meant! And, in addition, the Greeks did not use genealogies! So perhaps our Greek Christian (or potential Christian) would pick up the writings of St. Mark, which began:

*"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."*

*Mark 1:1*

The Greeks did not know what the Gospel was. They knew the word "gospel" means Good News (it is a Greek word after all), but they had not heard it used in a religious sense at all. So, once again, they did not understand what Mark was telling them about who Jesus was or what He had come to do. And "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah." But what/who was that and what did it mean?

If they sought answers in the Gospel of Luke, they had the same difficulty. In verse 1, Luke says he is undertaking

*“...to compile a narrative of the events fulfilled among us.”*

*Luke 1:1*

Luke was talking about all the promises God had made to Israel in the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfilled them. But the Greeks, not having read the Old Testament nor being familiar with its promises, had no idea what “events” would be fulfilled. They knew nothing of the prophecies that foretold the coming of a Messiah nor what that would mean to God’s people.

So, several decades after Matthew, Mark, and Luke had written, when the Christian Church had “spread its wings” to include more Gentiles than Jews, John sought to introduce this *Jewish* Messiah to *Greek* believers in a way they could understand. But how could he do that? Ultimately, John adapted a word common to both Jews and Greeks, a very special word: “Logos.” “Logos” means “word” in both languages, but it had both a Jewish and Gentile connotation; we need to look at both.

### **Jewish Background:**

To a Jew, “Logos” meant more than a sound that came from the mouth. A word was a thing of great power. And if God spoke it, it was a thing of almost infinite power! So, the Jews wrote in their creation account that God literally spoke creation into existence!

*“...then God said, “ ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.....”*

*Genesis 1:3*

And so it was with the earth, the plants, the animals, and even humanity. God *said* it and it came to be.

We see the power of words in many ways in the Old Testament. For example: The prophet Isaiah wrote that: “*God’s word went out and didn’t*

*come back empty - it accomplished His purpose.” 55: 11*

A man's word is powerful, also. Remember the story of Jacob in the Old Testament book of Genesis? He was one of the twin sons of Isaac. Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, and received a special deathbed blessing that was supposed to belong to Esau, Jacob's twin brother. It was, indeed, a special blessing, allowing Jacob to inherit all the land, servants, flocks, and herds that were Esau's birthright. And though Esau begged for the return of the blessing, and though Isaac desperately wanted to give it to him, it could not be given. Once the words were spoken, they could not be recovered. Truly, words had great power.

But in the Jewish tradition, “Logos” meant more than a “word.” It also meant reason. That concept is reflected in the Old Testament (more properly known as the Hebrew Scriptures) in a group of writings called Wisdom Literature. These works were produced late in Old Testament history, not long before Jesus' birth. They include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Sirach, and the Book of Wisdom. In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Proverbs, “Wisdom” is speaking and says:

*“The Lord begot me, the first-born of His ways... Before He made the earth, I was brought forth. When He established the heavens, I was there...when He made firm the skies above...then I was beside Him as His craftsman, and I was His delight day by day.”*

*Proverbs 8:22, 23, 27, 28, 30*

These words seem to be the same words John used to describe Jesus, the Word. Wisdom had that same eternal existence, that light- giving function, that creative power which John attributed to Jesus, the Christ. So, when John was searching for a way to tell the Gentiles the good news about Jesus, he found within his own faith and in the record of his people, the idea of the Word, not just an ordinary sound, but a thing of great power and wisdom, present eternally before time with the Creator God. So, as William Barclay writes, what John was saying in his Prologue is this: “If you want to

see that Word of God, look at the creative power of God that brought the world into existence, and that gives light to every man, look at Jesus Christ. In Him, the Word of God came among you.” (William Barclay, The Gospel of John, pg 34).

### **Greek Background:**

This idea of “Logos” was already present in Greek thought. Five hundred sixty years before Jesus, an Ephesian philosopher named Heraclitus observed that everything was constantly changing and evolving. He was famous for saying that you can’t step into the same river twice because the water has flowed beyond that spot and, therefore, it is different. If that is so, he reasoned, why isn’t life complete chaos? He decided that the reason was because change, though real and inevitable, is not haphazard; it is controlled and ordered, and follows a continuous pattern, and ***that pattern he called “Logos.”*** So, Heraclitus defined “Logos” for the Greeks as the order under which the universe continues to exist.

The Greek thinkers were fascinated with this idea - especially a group called the Stoics. They loved the idea of order in the universe, and for them, order always meant a mind; it always indicated reason. They asked: “What was it that gave man reason and the knowledge of truth, the ability to tell the difference between right and wrong? What made man able to think and reason?” Jews called Him YHWH or God; The Greeks called it Logos. So, the Greeks, by the time of Jesus, had concluded that “Logos” was nothing less than The Mind of Reason controlling the world and every man in it.

Therefore, when the apostle John went to the Greeks to tell them about Jesus, he said: “For centuries you have been thinking and writing and dreaming about the Logos, the power which made the world, the power which keeps the order in the universe, the power by which men think and reason and know, the power by which men come into contact with God. Now I want to introduce you to Him: The man called Jesus is Logos, come

down to earth, “the Word became flesh.” (William Barclay, The Gospel of John, pg 36).

“Who is God?” This is the first question a person is likely to ask when he seeks answers to the meaning of life. The apostle John gives one definition of Who God is in the famous first three verses of his “Good News.”

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God and all things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be.”*

*John 1:1-3*

For the rest of this study, we will be looking at how John describes Jesus, the Word became flesh (vs. 14), and what that tells us about who God is. We will see that He is Life and Light (vs. 4, 5), He makes possible our adoption as children of God (vs. 12). He is the revelation of God’s Glory on earth (vs. 14b), and He demonstrates for us the way of Grace and Truth so that we can spend eternity in heaven with Him. (vs. 15-18).

These are challenging truths, not always easy to understand and often requiring eyes of faith in order to see them. Our prayer is that you will deepen your faith and understanding of our awesome triune God if you open your mind and heart to the truths John presents in his Prologue.

Our thanks go to St. Jules Church for hosting our rowdy group, and especially for Jalyne Dupre, our treasured friend who acts as our liaison with St. Jules. My thanks also go to Cindy Habetz for the hours and hours of work that went into this splendid commentary! Her beautiful faith and years teaching religious education are obvious, beneficial to us all, and deeply appreciated!

Finally, we are so thankful to God for bringing **you** to us, and we pray that our time together will be a blessing to you!

## Susan Castille and the **Fall 2017 Facilitators**

Jill Ardoin, Betty Cooper, Becky Domingue, Mitzi Domino,  
Debbie Giglio, Christine Guillory, Cindy Habetz, Patty Prather, Chris Preis,  
Colleen Rabalais, Kay Richard, Tana Trahan, Rosie Zehnder

### **RESPOND:**

From the beginning of time, all people everywhere and all major religions have tried to answer the questions:

1. Where do we come from?

---

---

---

2. What are we doing here?

---

---

---

3. Where are we going?

---

---

---

---

4. How do we get there?

---

---

---

---

---

---

In view of the description of Logos, the following questions will spark discussion:

1. Why does John call Jesus the Word of God?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does your word mean to the people around you?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What is the connection between your word and action?

---

---

---

---

---

---

## LET US PRAY

### Thoughts:

“Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your values, and your values become your destiny.”

Mahatma Gandhi

### Scripture:

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

*Matthew 4:4*

*“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His Being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”*

*Hebrews 1:3*

### Prayer:

My precious Lord, You know all my thoughts, needs, and desires. Write Your Word on my heart, mind, and lips and set me on a daily path of doing Your Will lovingly and joyfully. As I begin this study of Your Love, Light, Life, Salvation, Glory, Grace, and Truth, please keep me open to Your message for me and focused amidst all the daily distractions. Thank You for calling me to this time and place where I may grow in Your Word and live more deeply in Your Spirit. Through Jesus name I pray.



## **WEEK TWO: “WHERE DO I COME FROM?” OR “WHO MADE THE WORLD?” “WHO MADE YOU?” (Baltimore Catechism)**

*“All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race.”* John 1:3-4

*“I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son 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.”* Nicene Creed

### **READ: THEOLOGICAL COMMENTS**

#### **CREATION: ORIGIN OF LIFE**

As you read the Prologue of John, it might help to think of it as the musical overture of a Broadway show which includes a beautifully woven set of excerpts from all the music heard throughout the play. In like manner, John’s Prologue is a foreshadowing of the themes that John explores throughout his gospel of Jesus as Divine Word, Light, Life, Glory, Grace, and Truth. It is no accident that John began his gospel with the words, “In the beginning was the Word...,” going straight to the claim of the Divinity of Jesus. Preceding John’s gospel, the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke emphasized the lineage, family situation, and birth narrative in order to place Jesus firmly in the Jewish tradition as the long awaited Messiah. Matthew began his gospel by proving Jesus’ heritage by listing His lineage from the House of David, the line from which Isaiah predicted the Messiah would come. Incidentally, Jews often referred to the Messiah as the Son of David! For this reason, the symbol of Matthew’s gospel is “Man.” The opening scene of Mark’s gospel describes John the Baptist proclaiming the coming of the Messiah like a lion roaring

in the desert; hence, the regal, fearless lion symbolizes this gospel. The third gospel according to Luke, who was a physician, carried the theme of the Suffering Servant (prophesied by Isaiah) throughout his gospel; thus, the ox, which was the main beast of burden of that time, became the symbol of this account. Finally, when John wrote his gospel many years later, the group of converts had grown and changed from solidly Jewish to a mix of Greek Gentiles and Jews. He did not waste time reiterating some of the life narratives found in earlier gospels but soared like an eagle straight to the Divinity of Jesus. Therefore, it follows that the eagle was chosen to represent John's gospel.

The words, "In the beginning," would have grabbed both Jewish and Greek readers alike. For the Jews, the words would have called to mind the book of Genesis and the Creator of the world. In Genesis, God speaks and that word brings man to life; in the Prologue, the Word of God brings eternal life to all humanity. All educated Jewish people recognized each book of Sacred Scripture by the first line: i.e.. "In the beginning..." Genesis, "These are the names of the sons..." Exodus, "The Lord called Moses..." Leviticus, and so on. The Greeks would have been reminded of the Alpha and the Omega and their interest would have been tweaked by the claim of Jesus being timeless. They had no preconceived notions nor any background in studying the Old Testament prophecies of a Messiah and believed in many gods, so John's claim of Jesus' Divinity was very important to this new community of believers.

One other important point is that from the earliest times of Christianity there have been heretical views that either over- emphasized or denied the humanity or the Divinity of Jesus. So, John flat out stated that Jesus is One with God, the very expression (the Word!) and fullness of God. John placed Jesus in the timeless position and character of God, the One Who always was and always will be! No matter how the modern world frames the timing of material existence, God is the Author of creation and Jesus was right

there with Him. John's point that Jesus is God, timeless in existence, all-powerful, co-equal with the Father was clearly made and understood by his Jewish and Greek readers. From the very first verse, John wanted his readers to know what took him three years to learn as he walked with Jesus and sixty years to ponder, that Jesus is God and Creator. As we learned in week one of this study, John referred to Jesus as the Word because John knew Jesus to be the Truth of God, the embodiment of God's message. Jesus Himself and His work are the whole essence and revelation of God. "God speaks Himself in Jesus!"

## **REFLECT: PERSONAL APPLICATION**

Before 1960, Catholic youth began each school year with the following questions. For those of you who studied the Baltimore Catechism and for those of you who have heard stories about this regimen of Catholic youth, here is a taste, a blast from the past:

1. Who made the world? God made the world.
2. Who is God? God is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things.
3. Who made you? God made me.
4. Why did God make you? God made me to know, love, and serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next.

While these teachings were definite, concrete, and taught diligently, it takes a lifetime to understand and grow into the meanings, dimensions, and lessons as they apply to each phase of life and a growing relationship with a God Who dwells in us. As you ponder John's words now, think about what they meant to you the very first time that you read them. How does John's boldness in his declaration of Jesus' Divinity affect you now? There is no apology or watering down of the message or claim that Jesus, the Word, is Divine.

What value does your word mean to you and from you to others? When someone asks, "Give me your word," what does that mean? Years ago there was no need for contracts because people gave their word to seal a deal or a promise. The given word included honor, integrity, and the essence of the person giving her word. Another expression, "Say the magic word!" produces the response of "Please!", which usually has the power to spring us into action. The power of the spoken and written word has conquered many hearts and is most powerful when put into action. We are told that our words are meaningless if we do not do as we say. In other words, "Walk the Talk!" Jesus is God in action in the flesh; God's Word breathed out into mankind!

One more thought before we close this chapter: Think about the opening lines in the books that have grabbed your attention instantly. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." (*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens); "Once upon a time...." (all fairytales!) What memories come to mind? What feelings rise inside of you? A good story-teller grabs you with the first line to spark interest. This is just what John did with, "In the beginning..." As creatures bound by time, we are intrigued by the idea of eternity, timelessness. The eternal NOW! The closest we can possibly come to some understanding of eternity is to live in the present moment - the precious present (gift) where God lives. Remember that God identified Himself as "I AM" to Moses, not "I WILL BE!" or "I WAS!" We are designed to live in the moment in twenty-four hour intervals of darkness and light. We can only handle one day at a time with God. "Give us this day our daily bread..."- our daily grace, daily peace! "Come, Lord Jesus!"

**RESPOND:**

1. John used the Word to refer to Jesus as God. Why? Explain how and why John purposely reflected Genesis in the Prologue? Why was the claim of Jesus' Divinity so important and needed to be emphasized sixty years after Jesus' ascension?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. The Prologue of John is used in the Christmas Mass liturgy along with the birth narrative. Why do you think this is appropriate and necessary?

---

---

---

---

---

3. We are creatures of time set in twenty-four hour increments. Discuss how living in the present moment can give you a sense of timelessness.

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. What is the relationship between Jesus and God the Father? How do you explain Jesus' pre-existence in the light of His incarnation? How would you convince a non-believer that Jesus is Divine?

---

---

---

---

5. To see Jesus, the Word of God Who became flesh for our sake, is to see God in visible form. To hear Jesus is to hear the voice of God. How does this affect your perception of God? How does this reality enhance your relationship with God?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **PONDER: Optional**

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" How do you understand and live this beatitude? (Mt. 6) Why do you think that Jesus listed this one first among eight? How does John's Prologue help you to embrace the attitude of poor in spirit?

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. The Prologue helps us to understand Jesus in a profoundly larger way. Meditate on these passages and what they mean to you: (a) the pre-existence of the Word - John 1:1-2; 17:5; (b) God/Word, Father/Son, distinctive but One - John 1:1; 17:21-22; (c) Jesus as God - John 1:1; 20:28; (d) Life - John 1:4; 3:16; 5:21-39; (e) Light - John 1:4, 9; 8:12; 9:5; (f) God's Glory - John 1:14; 12:41.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## LET US PRAY

### Thoughts:

*"When we accept God's Word, we enter into a new way of life. In God's Word, we move from grace to grace. (Jn 1:16) By living in God's Word, we walk in the Truth Who sets us free. (Jn 8:31-32) Accept, abide in, and carry God's Word."*

*Laudate website*

*"Like Mary, we can birth Jesus again and again as we proclaim the Word!"*

*St. Augustine*

**Scripture:**

*"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through me.....whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.....Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."*

*John 14: 6, 9, 11*

## Prayer:

My dear Lord and God, create in me a humble spirit. Infuse me with deep faith, love, and generosity to embrace Your plan for me and to serve You in selfless love. Give me the courage to embrace and live Your Word, to say what I mean and live what I say. Please forgive me for the times that I have failed to love and failed to be obedient to Your will for me. Thank You for continuing to open my eyes, my mind, and my soul to Your presence, message, and love for me and all mankind.

### Journal Entry:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**WEEK THREE : “WHAT AM I DOING HERE?” Part 1**  
**OR “WHY DID GOD MAKE YOU?”**  
**OR “WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?”**

*“The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the Light, so that all might believe through Him. He was not the Light, but came to testify to the Light. The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”*  
*John 1:5-9*

*“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.”*  
*Nicene Creed*

**READ: THEOLOGICAL COMMENTS**

**LIFE AS THE LIGHT of GOD**

There are two very distinct themes running through these lines from John. First, he describes Jesus as the Light of the World, God made Man, to dispel darkness. Then, John tells us about God’s servant John the Baptist who answered God’s call to prepare the people for the Light.

Theologically speaking, the Triune, Eternal God knows all things and had a plan to send Jesus, the Light of our Salvation, to earth from the very beginning. But just for the sake of a good story, close your eyes and imagine God the Father and God the Son in human terms having a conversation about how the world, Their beautiful creation, was turning out. Picture God the Father commiserating over all the wars, all selfishness, all the misuse of power, and the misunderstanding and false representation of His love for us. Like any good, human father, God the Father might have

thought that the people of earth should have more well-placed discipline to make them, finally, see the Light. (Many stories of the Old Testament seem to reflect this fatherly instinct!) In response, God the Son could have made this suggestion, “I think it is time for the next phase of our plan for salvation of our people, Father. I’m ready to become one of them so that they may really see Our Light of Love and Truth shining through the darkness of hate and sin. If they can see a life lived in Truth, oneness with You, and total, unconditional love, maybe they will learn Who We really are and how to live in peace and joy as We planned.” “But Son,” responded God the Father, “You do realize that Our people have killed most of the prophets and will hurt You and kill You, too, don’t You? That being said, it sounds like a good idea, Son! I am so proud of You! You have my blessing.” As perfect as God’s plan always is, how ironic that the One who created all things should come to claim what was His, and, yet, He was rejected by His own people. Remember the parable of the wicked tenant farmers? (Mt. 21:33-46)

From the beginning of time, God has loved us fully and totally, no matter the cost. “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God!” (Nicene Creed) Jesus, as the Light of the World, offers us total Truth of God and the promise of Eternal Life, forever dispelling the darkness of sin and eternity without God. “In Him was Life and the Life was the Light of men” (Jn 1: 4). “...the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn.1:5). God’s first creative act was light, which was the first step in bringing order to the formless void. In like manner, the Light brought by the Word is the first step toward bringing order into the chaos that sin has wrought in our lives.

Who was John the Baptist and why was he needed in this plan of God to save the world? John was the only child of Zechariah (Priest of the Jewish Temple) and Elizabeth (Mary’s first cousin). The only thing we know about John’s early years lies in the gospel account of his first meeting with Jesus, his second cousin. Both boys were infants in utero, but Scripture tells us that John was already filled with the Holy Spirit and leapt in his mother’s

womb in response to being in the presence of the Holy One of God (Lk 1:41). Think about this for a minute - the first person to recognize Jesus as God was an unborn child!

The Call, the Mission, and the Message! John, like all of us, had a special call, mission, and message from God. From John's first meeting with Jesus, Scripture leaps (no pun intended!) to his choice of career. As the only son of a Priest of the Jewish Temple, John's heritage and duty was to become a priest, pre-ordained by Jewish law and custom. Throwing away his birthright, John followed the call of Spirit to be a prophet. As predicted by Isaiah, John was "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness; 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His path'" (Is. 40:3).

If there were one word to capture John and his mission, it is "prepare." John was called to be a prophet to prepare the people for the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. As foretold in Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me....." John's sole assignment was to bear witness to the Light (Jn 1:7-8). "Go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways" (Lk 1:76).

The message, as simple and forthright as the mission is summed up in the word "repent!" This one word captures a whole life of sin in the face of God. John was called, gave up his birthright, and followed the call to a life of austerity in the desert in order to prepare the people for the Light, the Word, the Savior of their souls. By living a life of prayer and self-denial, his example drew people to his message.

## **REFLECT: PERSONAL APPLICATION**

"Repent!" In the Catholic tradition and in many major religions, the daily habit of examination of conscience is taught. With the help of a list of vices and virtues, the faithful are encouraged to face their failures in the light of

the righteousness of God. It is a very good exercise to help form the habit of humility before God and honesty about our own human weakness. In the time of Jesus in which the pagan Roman Empire ruled, the idea of conscience and absolute right was unknown. Might was right! In the modern world, it could be said that feelings rule and individual desires are laws unto themselves. Relativism is the major heresy of the day (we will study this further in week 6). The ancient world had no absolute compass of right and wrong other than Caesar. Abortion and infanticide were common and tolerated. Sound familiar? John the Baptist was up against a world similar to our own. His message of repentance required a deep consciousness of offense to God and deep humility to realize personal guilt. The times have changed, but human nature stays the same. Blessed are the poor in spirit!

The call, the mission, the message! John was called, given a special mission, and proclaimed God's message to all, boldly and faithfully. We are given the same assignment - a special call, mission, and message from God that only we can answer and fulfill. In the sacraments we are ordained, graced in the pursuit of God's purpose for each of us. In Baptism we are anointed with the Holy Spirit as God's children and given the heritage of priest, prophet, and king. Our priestly heritage is a call to holiness; as prophet we are called to proclaim the good news by our words and actions; and, as king we are called to serve others in love as Jesus did when He washed the feet of the apostles. In Confirmation, the call is deepened and we are sent into the world with the mission to proclaim Christ. And, in Matrimony and Holy Orders we are anointed in service to others. As single laymen and vowed religious nuns and brothers, we are equally called into this service. Our lives are not our own, but God's. We are each given special talents and are called by Him to use them lovingly and selflessly to bring souls to God, especially through the example of living our lives in close communion with Him. As we live and love in His name, imagine how God's eyes must light up when He looks at us. Imagine Him saying to *you*, "I am so proud of you, My child. You have my blessing!"

## RESPOND:

1. John 12:46 states, "I have come into this world as its Light, to keep anyone who believes in Me from remaining in the dark." What kind of Light does Jesus offer? What kind of darkness does Jesus warn us to avoid? What do we need to be able to "see" the Light?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why do you think that so many people were attracted to John the Baptist's message of repentance? Why was this so important in preparation for accepting Jesus as Light and Savior? Is it still important today?

---

---

---

---

---

3. How can we form and inform our conscience? How does this affect our relationship with God and neighbor?

---

---

---

---

---

4. What does the Life of Jesus tell you about how to discern God's will for you? How do you know God's purpose for your life?

---

---

---

---

---

---

5. In Baptism you were anointed as priest (holy in Spirit), prophet (witness to the Truth), and king (servant of Love). How do you see these missions playing out in your life?

---

---

---

---

---

### **PONDER: Optional**

1. What kind of testimony of faith does your life give to the world?  
Do your intentions, actions, relationships reflect your commitment to love God and follow His will? How?

---

---

---

---

---

2. In what areas of your life do you allow God's Light to shine?

What part is still in the dark?

---

---

---

---

---

3. How does Jesus' pre-knowledge of His rejection, suffering, and death affect your understanding of God's love for you?

---

---

---

---

---

## LET US PRAY:

### Thoughts:

*"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness!"*

*Chinese Proverb (used at the end of Bishop Fulton  
Sheen programs)*

*"God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has  
not promised tomorrow to your procrastination."*

*St. Augustine*

**Scripture:**

*"I am the Light of the World. No follower of mine will ever walk in darkness; no, he will possess the Light of Life."      John 8:12*

*"The night shall be no more. They will need no light from lamps or the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever."      Revelation 22:5*

**Prayer:**

Lord, let Your light shine in me and through me. Your life is the Light that gives Truth, Knowledge, and Understanding to all who would see through the eyes of faith. Deepen my faith and open the eyes of my soul to all that You have planned for me. I love You and trust You to give me the daily strength and peace that I need to carry out Your will and purpose for me. Thank You, Lord, for placing Your love and trust in me.

**Journal Entry:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## WEEK FOUR: “WHAT AM I DOING HERE?” Part 2

### OR “WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE?”

*“He was in the world, and the world came to be through Him, but the world did not know Him. He came to what was His own, but His people did not accept Him. But to those who did accept Him, He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision, but of God.”*

*John 1:10-13*

*“For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.....I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.*

*Nicene Creed*

## READ: THEOLOGICAL COMMENTS

### LIFE AS CHILDREN OF GOD

John has stunned us, once again, as he proclaims in these next verses that God freely has **chosen** us, who are sinners, as His **children** and sent His own Son to be one of us in order to give us Eternal Life!!! Has the pure awesomeness of these claims sunk into every fiber of your being?

First, let us look at the sublime miracle of the Word Made Flesh. In reference to the total humanity of Jesus, John could not have been clearer in his choice of words. The word for “flesh” in Hebrew and Greek had very distinctly carnal connotations. Using “flesh” instead of “body” was deliberate and very important because it is unequivocal in its meaning and reference. Within the first hundred years of Christianity, there were already heretics proclaiming that Jesus was either only divine or only human. One heresy,

called Docetism (from the Greek word “dokesis” meaning apparition), promoted the belief that Jesus was only divine and His body was only a vision. John’s use of very shocking language to emphasize that Jesus was of the flesh got the attention of his Greek audience who believed that all matter was evil. As is stated in one Bible Hub website commentary, “The Word becoming flesh is the zenith of God’s revelation. God, Who spoke earlier through prophets, now speaks through His Son.”

Another key word for the ancient Jewish reader is “tabernacled.” John states that “the Word was made flesh and is tabernacle (lives) among us.” To the Jewish reader, the word “tabernacled” opened their minds to God dwelling among them because it reminded them of the days of Moses and King David. Moses was commanded to build a beautiful tabernacle to house God in their midst.(Ex. 36:8; 39:32) Amazingly in John’s gospel, Jesus is the tabernacle and temple of God dwelling in their midst. Not only that, Paul tells us that **we**, as God’s children, are tabernacles of God, shining His Light among men. “Do you not know that you are temples of God and the Spirit Who dwells in your midst?”(1 Cor. 3:16).

Children of God!! Heirs of Heaven! God created us, so we are His naturally. BUT, He chose us to be His even after we sinned against Him. BLESSED! We are part of God’s family, given eternal life just for the asking and a full heritage of grace and the Gifts of the Spirit. Jesus took on flesh to be one of us in order to experience the problems and temptations and the fully human condition.

The chosen people, the Israelites, were prepared for centuries to recognize, receive, and accept the Messiah, but, when the time came, they rejected Him. While it is easy to judge them, we should refrain from casting stones because the world today still denies the Truth, the Light. It still prefers darkness and evil to the Light and Life of God because its deeds are evil (see John 3:19-20). At one point or another, we all fall into this trap

because we are all sinners. BUT! God the Word, the Son, is empowered to bring all who receive Him and believe Him into the family of God as His children - with full heritage and privileges to Life in the Spirit and eternity in the presence of God! Jewish people of Jesus' time traced their lineage as far back as possible, hopefully to King David and Abraham, to earn great blessing and esteem. Our bloodline as followers of Jesus is spiritual. We are fully chosen by the Word, our God Who loves and saves us. **God chose us!** He was hungry, tired, abandoned, cold, hot, rejected, and died for us so that we could be His. A friend, who was fully inspired by the joy of the Spirit, once proclaimed with awe and emphasis to a group of ladies, "Do you realize that we are the Royal Daughters of the King of Kings?!!" Do you?

In the Old Testament, Abraham and Moses were called friends of God (Ex. 33:11, 2 Chron. 20:7). One Laudate Commentary explains that "friendship entails a personal, close, and loving relationship and a union of heart, mind, and spirit with the One Who created us in love for love." Now, we are family! While sons and daughters of God's family offer loyalty, respect, and obedience, there is, also, a total giving of self in a bond of affection, esteem, and joy in each other's company. We were made for God, but failed and still fail to know Him. God didn't become man so that He could know and love us better. God became human so that we could know Him better - in fact, so that we could become His children! How awesome is that?!!!

## **REFLECT: PERSONAL APPLICATION**

*"The virgin will give birth to a son, and they will call Him  
'Immanuel' - which means 'God with us.'"      Isaiah 7:14*

While John says nothing about Mary in the Prologue, she is there in spirit as the vessel God chose to be the mother of the Word Incarnate. Once again, God used one of His children, His most beloved child Mary, to assist

in His plan to save the world from sin. He needed Mary to give birth to our Savior, His Son Jesus, just as surely as He needs each of us to bear Jesus in our hearts and souls to give birth to His love daily in our lives. Mary's heart was open to the voice of God and recognized His angel messenger. Her soul was free of pride, selfishness, vanity, and all manner of sin, so God could fill her with His Life. "Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you!" (Lk. 1:28).

The Bible only names two people as "full of grace" – Jesus and Mary. Jesus created Mary, but Jesus was born of her!! We talk about and cherish our soul sisters and soulmate, but can you imagine what *their* relationship must have been like?! Mary could have said 'No' to God, but she would never have entertained the possibility of denying the God she loved so dearly. Why do we say 'No' to God? What would make it easier for you to say 'Yes' to God every day?

As we take one more look at the awesome status we are given as children of God, it is interesting to note that in the Roman Empire children were not cherished. In that environment, Jesus made a point of calling us children of God and told us we must be like children to enter heaven (Mt. 18:2-4). Jesus didn't give a list of childlike qualities, but what comes to mind when thinking of the virtues of a child are trust, joy, innocence, honesty, and being in the present moment. This list is much different than a list of childish attributes! In the natural world, children carry the genetics of their parents and often are told they are the "spitting image" of father or mother. The gifts and fruits of the Spirit and the Beatitudes are our spiritual genetics and heritage. In what way do you think that others might see the resemblance of your Father God in you? Does He have a special nickname for you?

And let us not forget the wonder of children! Probably, the most favorite time of year for children of all ages is Christmas. It is a joyful time of

rejoicing and exulting in a miracle beyond imagination. The actual birth of Jesus was set in such ordinary circumstances that we sometimes tend to let the normalcy and familiarity of this event dull us to the profound and astonishing event of God becoming Man. The real temptation is to keep Jesus in the manger, all cuddly and sweet, never allowing Him to grow into the God-Man Who looks straight into our hearts, minds, and souls to see who we truly are. How easy and self-serving it is to keep Him adorably contained and controlled! Try to look upon the birth of our Savior through the eyes of the shepherds who responded to the appearance of angels with childlike wonder. Try to follow Him in full trust as the Wise Men followed the star wherever it took them.

The meditation of Sarah Young in her book *Jesus Calling* on December 23rd states: "I am King of Kings and Lord of Lords, dwelling in dazzlingly bright Light! I am, also, your Shepherd, Companion, and Friend - the One Who never lets go of your hand. Worship Me in My holy majesty; come close to Me and rest in My Presence. You need Me both as God and as Man. Only My Incarnation on that first, long ago Christmas could fulfill your neediness. Since I went to such extreme measures to save you from your sins, you can be assured that I will graciously give you all you need. Nurture well your trust in Me as Savior, Lord, and Friend.

I have held back nothing in My provision for you. I have even deigned to live within you! Rejoice in all that I have done for you, and My Light will shine through you into the world" (Reference: 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Ps. 95:6-7; Rom. 8:32; 2 Peter 1:19).

## RESPOND:

1. Take time to reflect on the message of the angels to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-20) upon the Incarnation. What does this good news mean to you? How does it affect your everyday life?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Explain what it means to be a child of God? (Gal. 3:26) How does this happen? How is this gift claimed? Why was it necessary for Jesus to be “made flesh” for us to become “children of God?”

---

---

---

---

---

3. God has created you for joy and peace. The angels announced To the shepherds, “Be not afraid!” How often do you let fear and anxiety take your joy and peace? What can you do to stop this habit?

---

---

---

---

4. What does it mean to live in the joy of God, the joy of the Spirit?

How does faith play a part? How can you learn to live in the joy of God's presence?

---

---

---

---

---

5. What does it mean to be "full of grace?"

---

---

---

---

---

### **PONDER: Optional**

1. Have you ever thought of yourself as the Royal Daughter of the King of Kings? How does that make you feel? How does that change your outlook on life?

---

---

---

---

---

2. The fact that Jesus made us children of God (Jn. 1:12-13) gives us meaning and direction in life. What is your purpose and where are you going? What are you doing here?

---

---

---

---

---

### LET US PRAY:

#### Thoughts:

*“God often would enrich, but finds not where to place His treasure - not in hand nor heart a vacant space.”*

*Richard Chenevix Trench*

*“Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if He is not born in you, your soul is still forlorn.”*

*Ralph Cudworth*

#### Scripture:

*“I am the Good Shepherd, I know My sheep and my sheep know Me in the same way that the Father knows Me and I know the Father; for those sheep I will give My life.”*

*John 10:14-15*

**Prayer:**

My precious Lord, permeate my soul with Your peace and make me aware of Your presence throughout this day. No matter what pain or challenge or crisis faces me or my loved ones, open my soul to Your grace, peace, joy, and love - my "daily bread!" Thank You for making it possible for me to be Your child and shepherding me to eternal life.

## Journal Entry:

[illegible]



## **WEEK 5: “WHERE AM I GOING?”**

**OR “WHAT IS HEAVEN?”** (Baltimore Catechism)

***“Heaven is the state of everlasting life in which we see God face to face, are made like unto Him in glory, and enjoy eternal happiness.”***

*“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

*“And by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man..... He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and His kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, Who has spoken through the prophets.”*  
Nicene Creed

## **READ: THEOLOGICAL COMMENTS**

### **THE GLORY OF GOD**

“And the glory, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it” (Isaiah 40:5). Hear in your mind and memory the gorgeous strains of Handel’s “Messiah” being sung at Christmas concerts proclaiming the birth of our Lord Jesus. The angels proclaimed the Glory of God to the shepherds as the sky erupted in dazzling light (Lk. 2:8-20). While the Bible paints a vivid picture of God’s Glory, it is still somewhat difficult to define. Glory is one of those words about which we all have an idea or concept, but can hardly put into words. Here goes! The Glory of God, according to respected theologians, is the

beauty of His Spirit, a beauty that emanates from His character, goodness, power, love, and all that He is. Jesus is the embodiment, the incarnation of the Glory of God for all to see.

The prophet Isaiah (6:3) exclaims through the seraphim, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God Almighty. The whole earth is full of His Glory...” In this passage Isaiah describes God’s holiness as His Glory; the Glory of God is His holiness made manifest. John takes that one step further as he proclaims in the Prologue that God’s Glory is God’s perfection and holiness made visible in the Person of Jesus. This claim is even more powerful in the context of the account of Moses being denied the vision of God’s face. Moses could only hear God’s voice, but was not allowed to see His Glory. In the words of God in Exodus 33:20, “...no one shall see Me and live!” Then, Jesus came among us and we could see God’s face, His Glory! Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Do you see the light of this truth in the Glory of Christ in the gospel? For this reason we were made: to know, love, serve, and see God in this world and the next (Baltimore Catechism paraphrased).

While this is not a study of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit must be included in the framework of a discussion about God’s Glory. Jesus was sent to us to reveal God’s Glory and the Spirit continues that mission in and through believers. The words of the Laudate website commentary for Trinity Sunday express the concept of the triune nature of God beautifully: “The Lord Jesus has revealed to His disciples the great mystery of our faith - the triune nature of God and inseparable union of the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus’ mission is to reveal the Glory of God to us - a Trinity of Persons - God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and to unite us with God in a community of love. The ultimate end, the purpose for which God created us, is the entry of God’s creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity.”

In baptism, we are called to share in the life of the Holy Trinity here on earth and after death in eternal Light. Do you see God throughout the day? Do you recognize His face and hear His voice in the world and within yourself? As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote of God long ago, “You were within me and I was outside, and it was there I searched for You...On entering into myself I saw, as it were, with the eyes of my soul, what was beyond my spirit: Your immutable Light.”

One more thought about God’s Glory: Did you ever wonder why medieval artists always place halos around Jesus, Mary, and the saints? Perhaps these artists were well-versed in the concepts of God’s Glory, the Light of the World tabernacled in the human soul. We often speak of people who have a certain aura about them. The halo depicts the aura of the Spirit of goodness, holiness, and glory shining through the individual. That glow of God’s Glory, present in each person who lives in the Spirit, can be seen through the eyes of faith and love. The first step is to honor the indwelling of God within ourselves. Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and prolific author, teaches, “All awareness, enlightenment, aliveness, and transformation begins with recognizing that your DNA is divine and unearned as is everyone else’s.”

## **REFLECT: PERSONAL APPLICATION**

If God’s Glory is manifested in Jesus and Jesus sends His Spirit to be manifested through each of us, then, it follows that you (we) must “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.” (Mt. 5:16) We have the potential of glorifying God when we invite the Spirit into our lives (daily!) and allow the Light of God to flow through the love we share, the music/art/literature we produce, the heroism that propels us into action, the generous and selfless donation of our time, talent, and money. Clearly, the gifts (Is. 11:2-3) and fruits (Gal.5:22-23) of the Spirit, played out in our lives, give glory to God and

allow glimpses of His face to be seen again and again on earth. By allowing the Spirit to live in our souls and flow through our lives, we have a taste of heaven on earth. As we forgive, surrender to God, live in peace and joy, thank God for all things, and do God's will, in the words of Fr. John Riccardo, who wrote a book by the same title, "Heaven starts now!"

The reality, however, is that human nature is subject to pitfalls, willful ignorance, stubbornness, and a whole host of ungodly tendencies, attitudes, and misconceptions. The Bible is full of stories in which the Israelites mistook the "created" for the Creator, embracing false idols instead of the Living God. The well-known story of the golden calf, much like the money, fame, and power of modern times, is a vivid account of how dazzled we can be by worthless pursuits and how possessive God is of our love. God's glory can never be eclipsed by the idols we choose over Him. Created or finite glory, such as physical beauty, social status, money and all it can buy, fame, relationships, talents, and so on - FADE! Only God's Glory is constant, omnipresent, and eternal!!

We often criticize people whom we describe as glory seekers or those who fish for compliments. Nowadays, everyone has to be a princess! The question is in which kingdom?! Our glory fades fast in the presence of God's glory. In the eternal kingdom, the glory of God paints the heavens. His glorious beauty is seen in the life of Mother Teresa, the face of a baby, the sunrise and sunset, a lush forest or flowering garden, snow-capped mountains, and every face filled with love. Think back to your childhood and try to remember a person whom you loved and who loved you. You probably thought he or she was totally beautiful, only to realize as an adult that he or she would never win a beauty contest. The force of his or her kindness, care, smile, and love for you made him or her beautiful. You were touched by the Spirit of God!

There are no less than eighty-eight Bible verses which tell us to seek the

Lord. Isaiah 55:6 implores us, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.” Jeremiah 29:13 promises, “You seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” Where do you find the Lord? Obviously, we find God throughout the Bible and in the gospels in the person of Jesus. Since the first Pentecost the Holy Spirit has been at work in followers of Jesus. That means US!! So, what do you think that the Lord would tell you if you asked Him what His Glory looks like now? I think He would say something like, “My precious child, I have given you a world full of beautiful things which serve to remind you of My constant presence and love. Not only that, I daily **choose** to pour my Light into your soul so that you can reflect My Love and Glory to the world. Be on the lookout for the healing hand that mends the wounded and soothes pain; or the smile of love that lifts the soul; or the twinkle in the eye born of innocence, faith, and integrity; or the many faces of love poured out in all situations by those who choose to let Me love through them. These are just a few of the ways that my Glory is seen on earth! I, like any parent, am thrilled to see a reflection of Myself in the souls of My children!!” St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that we are vessels which contain the Glory of God. From this the Catholic Church teaches that we are made (spiritually) in the image and likeness of God. “Go, you are sent!” (Mass Liturgy)

## **RESPOND:**

1. Explain how Jesus reveals the Glory of God to us. Describe God’s Glory in your own words.

---

---

---

---

---

2. How do holiness, beauty, and love point and compare to God's Glory?

---

---

---

---

---

3. The Trinity is a mystery! We can know Who, but we can't know how. Discuss "Who" as found in these biblical verses: Mt. 28:19; Gal. 4:6; Jn. 3:16; Lk. 10:22; and Rm. 8:14-15

---

---

---

---

---

4. How does God's love bring healing, pardon, and wholeness to our lives? What do we have to do or what attitude do we have to have in order to allow God's Spirit to flow through us? (Rev. 3:20)

---

---

---

---

---

5. When the Bishop ordains new priests, he prays over them and challenges them: “Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s call.” Since we, too, are called to live in God’s Glory, how do you meet this challenge in your life?

---

---

---

---

---

**PONDER:**

1. Fr. Rohr teaches that our DNA is divine. What does he mean by this? Does it affect your understanding of being created in the image and likeness of God?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Do you invite the Holy Spirit to live in you and act through you every day? Why or why not?

---

---

---

## LET US PRAY:

### Thought:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.”

St. Francis of Assisi

### Scripture:

*“I am the Resurrection and the Life. Anyone who believes in Me will live, even though they die.”*

*John 11:26*

*“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”*

*Galatians 2:20*

*“Your Light has come; the glory of the Lord shines upon you!”*

*Isaiah 60:1*

**Prayer:**

Dear Lord, show me how to live this day in the glory of Your Spirit. Show me Your radiance in the faces of all I meet today and give me the grace to return Your love, Your glory to them. “Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

### Journal Entry:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## WEEK SIX: “HOW DO I GET THERE?”

*“John testified to Him and cried out saying, ‘This is He of Whom I said, The One Who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because He existed before me!’ From His fulness we have received grace upon grace. For while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, Who is at the Father’s side, has revealed Him.”*

*John 1:15-18*

*“I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, born of the Father before all ages.....For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, He suffered death, and was buried, and rose again on the third day.....I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

*Nicene Creed*

## READ: THEOLOGICAL COMMENTS

### LIFE IN GRACE AND TRUTH

During the past five weeks, we have studied the Word, the Light, the Life, our adoption as children of God, and the Glory of God as revealed in the Person of Jesus, our Lord and God. Each dimension of God’s revelation, as recorded by John in the Prologue, answers our basic questions:

“Who is God?” Creator of heaven and earth, Eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“Where do I come from?” God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

“What am I doing here?” I am here to know, love, and serve  
God and to walk in His Light, Life, Truth, and Grace as a  
Child of God!!

“Where am I going?” Heaven, the Glory of God’s Presence, for  
all eternity!

In this final week of study we ask God, “How do I get there?” Jesus answered (answers) us by showing us the Way of Grace and Truth. For three years of His adulthood, Jesus taught us in parables and sermons, and showed us by His example a life lived in the Grace and Truth of God. The only information we are given in the gospels about Jesus’ formative years, other than the birth narrative, presentation in the temple, and the finding of Jesus in the temple when He was twelve, is that He grew in wisdom and grace. St. Luke sums up Jesus’ teens and twenties by writing, “Jesus, for His part, progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (Lk. 2:52).

So, what is Grace? Relying, once again, on the Baltimore Catechism, “Grace is a supernatural gift of God bestowed on us through the merits of Jesus for our salvation.” But what does all of this mean? Again we are faced with an untouchable, unseeable reality just like love, mercy, and a whole host of virtues. Actually, theologians equate Grace with God’s love and mercy and claim that this gift of Grace *is* God’s love and mercy, unmerited and freely given just because He wants us to have it. God’s mercy withholds the punishment we deserve, and Grace is God’s blessing that we do not deserve! Our job is to ask for it (Grace) every day.

Catholic theologians define the difference between Sanctifying Grace (God’s life within us) and Actual Grace (God’s moment to moment help as we call upon Him). Holy Scripture describes grace in many ways. For instance, Grace is God’s favor and forgiveness, victory over sin (James 4:6, Eph. 2:8). Grace is the ongoing, benevolent act of God working in us

without which we can do nothing (paraphrased from Phil. 2:13). While volumes have been written on the nature of Grace, for the purposes of this study, suffice it to say that Grace is the unmerited, free-flowing gift of God's love, life, and forgiveness, free for the asking through Jesus. That bears repeating: Divine Life is poured into us just because we ask!

Grace produces sanctification as we grow in relationship with God day by day and grow in His likeness. Do you want to be a saint? Remember that **heaven starts now** (life in union with God) and here is the formula: repent and request God's Grace; surrender to God's love, presence, and will in the present moment; grow in God's life and image - EVERY DAY. In a reflection on June 27, 2017 on the Laudate website, the following was written, "Like the pearl of great price, God offers the precious gift of His holiness (Grace) so that we may radiate the splendor of His truth, goodness, and glory in the way we think, speak, act, and treat others." The 15th century Carmelite saint, mystic, and Doctor of the Church, St. Teresa of Avila, put this concept in very practical terms and challenged every Christian when she

wrote: "Christ has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world ...You are His body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours." Because God loves perfectly and eternally, He wants to fill us with His holiness, mercy, love, and divine life. Are you ready to invite God into your soul, mind, activities, decisions, and will? Are you ready to answer God's call to be a saint?

God fills us with His Light, Love, and Grace so that we may know His Truth. The dictionary describes Truth as that which corresponds to reality. What is real is true; what is unreal is false. Reason is the tool through which we discern what is real. Reason is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments based on logic; however, reason can take us only so far.

For Christians the Truth comes to us through reason and faith and is embodied in the person of Jesus and the revelation of Holy Scripture. To know the Truth of Jesus we can go to the Old Testament Prophets, the Gospels, and to the eight “I am” statements, found in John’s gospel, to learn exactly what Jesus did, taught, and thought about His identity and reality. Also, God reveals His Truth in nature. Eight hundred years ago the great Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas argued that the existence and Truth of God can be known by all through the reality and intricacy of nature. All of nature points to a Higher Cause. We seem to know instinctively that ultimate Truth is somehow related to the existence of God.

Twelve hundred years before Thomas, St. Paul wrote to the Romans that “Truth is written on the hearts of humans, their consciences also bearing witness....”(Rom. 2:15). Psalm 51:10-11 tells us that the Holy Spirit writes God’s law of Love and Truth on our hearts. In keeping with these inspired thinkers, modern theologians have identified tenets of ultimate Truth upon which major religions agree. The number can vary according to the source, but here are some of the most common:

1. There is but one God. God is Love.
2. All is one!
3. Love thy neighbor, honor one another, honor yourself.
4. Live in the present moment.
5. We are made in God’s image.
6. As you sow, so shall you reap.
7. Surrender your personal will to Divine Will.

The reality is that there is ultimate Truth, it is written on the heart, and it always has been under attack in one way or another. Theologians and defenders of the faith have fought heresies, false teachings and concepts for centuries. A formidable heresy of the last more than one hundred years is Modernism which professes that the truths of the Christian religion must

be subjected to the ideas of rationalism, relativism, and secularism. Pope Pius X, who led the Church from 1903 to 1914, wrote and taught extensively against this distortion of Truth.

Just one of these “isms” is enough!! Relativism is the current fashion and puts the “id”, the ego, ME at the center of the universe. Whatever I think, feel, believe, and do is deemed acceptable simply because the almighty “I” chooses to think, feel, believe, and do. In this concept there is no ultimate Truth because Truth is believed to be totally subjective, that is, subject to personal whim, understanding, changing preferences, and the circumstances of the moment, and reason is given no place in judgment.

On the other hand, objective or absolute Truth is quite different, based on reason. Absolute Truth is objective, meaning that it is the same all the time no matter who, what, or where; it is universal, meaning it applies to all people; and it is unchangeable, meaning it is constant, consistent, not subject to personal feelings or lack of understanding. Way back in the middle of the 13th century, St. Thomas was arguing against a heresy known as Averroism which taught that reason and faith were incompatible, that reason was all there is and faith was an illusion of the uneducated. Faith and Reason, Thomas explained, are both from God and Faith is higher than Reason because it comes from the spiritual dimension of Man, the realm of contemplation, reflection, intuition, and calm presence to Other. How would Thomas respond to the thinkers of this century who have no room for faith OR reason in intelligent thought, replacing these with individual feelings?

Before he became Pope Benedict, Cardinal Ratzinger warned, “The more Relativism becomes the generally accepted way of thinking, the more it tends toward intolerance; thereby becoming a new dogmatism.....Relativism creates the illusion that it has reached greater heights than the loftiest thinking and achievements of the past and

prescribes itself as the only way to think and speak if one is to stay in fashion. Being faithful to traditional values and the knowledge that upholds them is labeled intolerant, and Relativism becomes the norm.” If the world is successful in destroying reason and faith, we are left with chaos and the tyranny of consensus.

No other creatures besides humans ask questions and seek Truth, Meaning, Love. Do we really want to know the Truth? Can we handle the Truth? (remember Jack Nicholson in “A Few Good Men”?!!) Are we asking the right questions? Are we humbly seeking the answers? Jesus tells us to ask, seek, and knock (Mt. 7:7). He answers our questions and makes known the Father. Jesus not only makes it possible to know about the Father, but makes it possible to know Him personally and call Him “Abba”. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and IS the answer to all of our questions.

## **REFLECT: PERSONAL APPLICATION**

There are many ways in which we use the word Grace in modern language and everyday usage: as part of titles of respect, insults, compliments, and in reference to attributes of God. The royals are given the title of “Her Grace” or “His Grace”. A rather snarky way of using the word is to say that “so and so” graced us with his or her presence, usually said with a tilt of the head and “that look” on our faces!! When we lose approval with God or someone on earth, we say that we have fallen from grace. And, then, there is the much desired grace period that we all hope to have when learning the rules or starting a new job. We compliment a ballerina as having danced gracefully with ease and beauty, fluidity of motion. And everyone cheers or commends the graceful winner or loser. Also, don’t forget the saving grace which can apply to a soul being given salvation as well as to a run down house with the only saving grace being a coat of fresh paint.

Finally, there is the little grace note that gives music a slight lift and trill, totally extra to the composition. Language is a beautiful and interesting tool

used by humans to express our thoughts. It is clear that our everyday, secular use of the word Grace reflects some of our theological understanding. Grace embodies and reflects God's beauty and ease of motion throughout the universe as well as within our bodies. We are saved eternally and daily by God's unmerited Grace or Life within us, gained through His Son Jesus. God's benevolence and forgiveness are given as we sin against Him and repent. Then, we hear in our souls the delightful grace notes in His song of love as He welcomes us, repentant sinners, home. Like the run down house, our only saving Grace is that God loves us beyond reason, logic, and our own unworthiness. How great is that?! How great Thou art!!!!

Fr. Richard Rohr describes grace and mercy this way: "The Spirit is described as 'Flowing Water' and as a 'Spring inside you' (John 4:10-14). Faith is trusting the Big River of God's providential love, which is to trust the visible Embodiment (the Son), the Flow (the Holy Spirit), and the Source (the Father). Divine Flow needs nothing but our acceptance." Do you approach the Father with confidence in the Divine Flow, in His love, and with expectant faith in His promises? St. Augustine of Hippo taught, "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us." Do you believe this? Do you believe this about your neighbor? ....your enemy?!!!

What ever happened to Truth? Is everything totally subjective? Is the new reality "Whatever!?" If everyone can believe his/her own "whatever" based only on feelings, pleasures, and personal prejudices or preferences, where does that leave us? Relativism leaves us no real way of explaining the world around us and no basis upon which to make sound or moral decisions. Relativism is everywhere, from parenting to Congress! Have you ever heard any of the following: "Who are you to impose your values on me?" or "Anything between consenting adults is OK?" or "There are no absolutes!" or "Jesus is not THE way, only A way." or "The unborn child has no rights under the law." or "There are no rights or wrongs, just feelings."

The examples are endless. If you have ever heard anything close to these statements, you have experienced Relativism.

There is a real challenge and mission given to Christians to profess Truth to a world that chooses to be spiritually blind. Living in the Truth, Life, Light, and Love of Jesus opens the gospel within us and allows God to pour His saving Grace on all who will look and listen. We have all heard that God loves the sinner, but abhors the sin, and we are called to do the same! Actually, as followers of Jesus, we are required to love all people, but to judge or scrutinize ideas and behaviors. The dictate to “judge not, lest you be judged” (Mt. 7:1- 3) has been misused and misinterpreted, opening the door even more to Relativism. Instead of stopping the habit of gossiping and judging people’s hearts (judgmentalism), we have stopped using right judgment, that is, judging right from wrong according to reason, objective truth, and God’s revelation.

Spiritual darkness keeps the world and us from seeing the true Light - Jesus! Jesus speaks of Himself as the Light of the World. Note that in Scripture, light is associated with God’s Truth and Life. Look to Jesus and in His Truth you will find joy, freedom, and wholeness (holiness) of body, mind, heart, and soul. The modern world has turned Truth upside down and segments of society have thrown away faith and God. Natural science cannot answer questions of poverty, crime, hunger, war, suffering nor can it grasp the dimensions and essence of love, joy, peace, patience, selfless sacrifice, forgiveness, or the power of the human will. We cannot just throw up our hands and say “Whatever!” Jesus’ life, choices, and relationship with God the Father point to a profound reality, that is, exactly how to live in the Light, the Love, the Glory, and the Truth as children of God. Jesus’ sole purpose on earth was to do the Father’s will which vividly illustrates humility and simplicity of heart. Humility produces a teachable heart which inclines toward Grace and Truth, allowing God to do all through us. But how do we know what God wants of us and where His Grace is leading

us? In closing, here is a practical set of guidelines for personal discernment of God's will for you as you continue the journey into union with God.

When making a tough decision:

1. Compare choices or options with Christ's life and Biblical teaching - Life, Love, Truth, the Word of God
2. Compare /reconcile choices/options with vows taken and primary commitments - Reality and Reason
3. Seek counsel from a trusted Christian advisor - Truth
4. Meditate: listen quietly to the whisper of God - God's Grace
5. Whose Glory and will are served - yours or God's?
6. Await in hope for peace: Does your decision give peace?

"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6: 24-26).

## **RESPOND:**

1. God's Grace embodies many attributes and concepts. Describe what Grace means in the following quotes: Eph. 4:7, Rom. 5:8-10, Ex. 33:17, Titus 2:11-14, Prov. 10:22. Describe Grace in your own words.

---

---

---

---

---

2. Choose one of the “I am...” statements of Jesus and explain the truth of God intrinsic in it (Jn. 6:35, 48, 51; 8:12 & 9:5; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). Why did you choose that particular one?

---

---

---

3. Describe the difference between subjective and objective truth, judgmentalism and right judgment. Why is Relativism so dangerous to Truth?

---

---

---

---

---

4. Having studied Jn. 1:1-18 in the last five weeks, which one of John’s key words (Word, Life, Love, Glory, Grace, Truth), used in relationship to God/Jesus, struck you most deeply and why? With which universal questions found at the head of each chapter of this commentary do you grapple the most and why?

---

---

---

---

---

## PONDER

1. Ask God for the grace of truth in your own life to show you any places in your choices, decisions, and soul where there might be spiritual blindness. What can you do to grow through this?

---

---

---

---

---

2. How do you think God is calling you to spread the news of His Truth and gift of Grace?

---

---

---

---

---

## LET US PRAY:

### Thoughts:

*“Truth sees God; and wisdom contemplates God; and from these two comes a third, a holy and wonderful delight in God Who is Love!”*

*St. Julian of Norwich*

*“The meaning of life, the wasted years of life, the poor choices of life! God answers the mess of life with one word: Grace!”*

*Max Lucado*

**Scripture:**

*“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace...”*

*Hebrews 13:9*

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works so that no one can boast.”*

*Ephesians 2:8-9*

*“I (Jesus) have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into the Truth.”*

*John 16:12-13*

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, fill me with Your Holy Spirit and guide me in Your Way of Life, Truth, and Goodness. Free me from spiritual blindness caused by sinful pride and refusal to believe and obey Your Word of Truth. May I always love You with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, and seek to do Your will in all things. In Jesus' name, I pray.

## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Thessalonians 5:23, 24