SESSION 1: GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN (EXODUS 1:1-13:16)

Introduction to Sacred Scripture

- **Inspiration:** “All Scripture is God-breathed...” (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - Literally, it is “breathed-out” by God, which implies divine action.¹
- All parts of the Sacred Scripture are Inspired
  - The human writers wrote everything God wanted written and no more.²
  - The human authors are “true authors” (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] 106), but the Holy Spirit is the principle author (CCC 304).
- **Inerrancy:** If all Scripture is Inspired, it cannot contain error. (CCC 107)
  - Incarnational Analogy³
    - Word Incarnate – In all ways like human beings, but without sin.
    - Word Inspired – In all ways like human literature, but without error.
- The task of interpreting the word of God “has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.”⁴
  - The Church gives us three guidelines for interpreting her Scriptures:
    - **Content and Unity** (CCC 112) – The Bible must be read as “one book”.⁵
    - **Living Tradition** (CCC 113) – Scripture must be interpreted in harmony with the entire living tradition of the church throughout history.
    - **Analogy of Faith** (CCC 114) – Interpretation of Scripture must never conflict with Church doctrine, as they both find their source in the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation of Scripture in the Church

- Since God is the primary author, there can be “multiple senses” in Scripture (CCC 115).
  - **Literal Sense** (CCC 116) – What is the meaning of the text?
    - It is important to discover what the literal sense was for both the human and divine author. Literary and historical analysis vital.
    - Multiple literal senses possible!
      - God is the author of the history that is being recorded, uses real events to communicate a message much like a human author uses words.
      - Literal sense does not mean literalism. (We read literally not literally.)
  - **Spiritual Senses** (CCC 117)
    - **Allegorical:** What is the significance in Christ?
    - **Moral:** What is the significance for the Christian life?
    - **Anagogical:** How does the passage teach about the world to come?
- God’s words are living and active (Hebrews 4:12) – they are relevant. He is speaking to each of us today, but will we listen? (Psalm 95:7-8)⁶

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¹ “To say that Scripture is ‘God-breathed’ is to speak of its divine origin as well as its divine potency as a word that never fails to accomplish God’s purpose.” Scott W. Hahn, “For the Sake of Our Salvation: The Truth and Humility of God’s Word”, Letter & Spirit 6, 27.


³ “For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.” Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 13.


⁶ “…time is in the Father’s hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today: ‘O that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts.’” (CCC 2659)
The Story of Exodus: God Remembers His Covenant

- What is a Covenant? An extension of kinship (family relations) by oath.8
  - An oath always entails a blessing and a curse element.9
- God wishes to enter into a covenantal relationship with us. (CCC 54-55)
- Covenant with Adam/Creation
  - “[man] is called by grace into covenant with his Creator…” (CCC 357)
  - Terms and conditions of covenant laid out in Gen 2:15-17.10
- Covenant Renewed with Noah11 (CCC 56-58)
  - Gen 9:9-1012
- Covenant with Abraham (CCC 59)
  - Three-fold: Gen 15, 17, 22 – nation, name, blessing.13
    - Especially important for this study is Gen 15:13-14, which is spoken in relation to the promise of a great nation.

Israel in Egypt (Exod 1:1-2:25)

- Children of Israel immigrate to Egypt due to famine and increase and multiply in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. (1:1-7)
- Israel becomes enslaved in Egypt in two ways:
  - Physically: A new Pharaoh comes to power “who did not know Joseph” and is threatened by the multitude of Hebrews. (1:8-10)
    - First solution: forced labor. (1:11)
    - Final solution: murder of all newborn boys. (1:15-16)
  - Spiritually: They had begun to worship the Egyptian gods and forget the ways of the Covenant.15 (Josh 24:14; Ezek 20:6-10)
- God prepares Israel’s deliverer (2:1-15)
  - The child Moses is saved. (2:10, the name Moses = to draw out)16
  - Moses as a man kills an Egyptian and flees when caught (escaping the clutches of Pharaoh for a second time). (2:11-15, see also Matt 7:1-5)
  - Moses settles in the Wilderness among foreigners. He goes from a life of privilege to a life of humility. (2:16-25)

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7 “Christians therefore read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen, Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord Himself…” (CCC 129 and following)


9 “…covenant oaths always entail both a blessing and a curse element. The oath swearer necessarily calls a curse down upon himself in his pledge. This self-curse may be expressed in either the verbal declaration or the ritual enactment.” Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 126-127.

10 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

11 “The [Noahic] covenant that undergoes renewal can be traced back to creation.” Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 95.

12 “Behold, I establish [confirm] my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.”

13 Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 103.

14 Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

15 “…Israel was being induced by God to forswear the Egyptian idols to which they had previously been yoked.” Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 46.

16 “…Moses is not only who he is, but also what he is. His name is his mission. He is to “draw out” his people from Egypt and lead them to Canaan.” Victor Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 139–140.
God Makes Himself Known to Moses (Exod 3:1-4:17)
- God speaks to Moses from a burning bush and reveals His purpose to bring Israel out of Egypt.\(^{17}\) (3:7-10)
- God reveals His name. (3:14)
  - “I AM THAT I AM” – I am the God that exists (as opposed to the many false gods of the nations, especially Egypt). I am the God who is.\(^{18}\) (See CCC 206-207)
- Moses Resists (3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13)
  - Excuses of Moses: Inadequacy, Ignorance, Incredibility, Inarticulateness, and finally, Insubordination.\(^{19}\)
- God’s Response: Presence (3:12) and Power (4:1-9). As result of Moses’ insubordination eloquence will be given to Aaron instead.\(^{20}\) (4:11-12, 14-17)

God Makes Himself Known to Pharaoh (Exod 5:1-7:13)
- Moses and Aaron relate God’s Request to Pharaoh: Israel must make a three-day journey into the wilderness for worship. Liberation from spiritual slavery is primary. Who will they serve? God or the “divine” Pharaoh? (5:1-3)
- Pharaoh Resists: He flaunts his power by increasing labor for Israel. (5:4-9)
- God’s Response: Remembers covenant, will also liberate them physically.\(^{22}\) (6:1-8)
  - The Plagues (7:14-10:29)
    - Display of power over Egyptian gods (Pharaoh foremost) and way of Life.
    - They increase in severity as Pharaoh’s heart hardens;\(^{23}\)
      - First four are an annoyance (Blood, Frogs, Gnats, Flies), next four inflict serious damage (Pestilence, Boils, Hail, Locusts), ninth is mysterious and terrifying ( Darkness for 3 days).\(^{24}\)
  - The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn (11:1-12:22)
    - Passover (pasch) ritual prescribed. Three elements: “1) Kill, 2) Spill, 3) Eat your fill” If it is followed God, seeing the blood on the doorposts, will protect that household from “the destroyer”. (12:23)
    - The Passover ritual is to be a Memorial, an event made present (re-presented) year after year. (CCC 1363)

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\(^{17}\) “When “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob” calls Moses to be his servant, it is because he is the living God who wants men to live. God reveals himself in order to save them, though he does not do this alone or despite them: he calls Moses to be his messenger, an associate in his compassion, his work of salvation.” CCC 2575.

\(^{18}\) “I am who am, I am the existing one. I am therefore to be called Yahweh ‘He is’, since that name best expresses my nature as essential existence.” E. Power, “Exodus,” in A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (ed. Bernard Orchard and Edmund F. Sutcliffe; Toronto;New York;Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 210.

\(^{19}\) Hamilton, Handbook on the Pentateuch, 143.


\(^{21}\) “There is something of a divine plea in this mission, and only after long debate does Moses attune his own will to that of the Savior God. But in the dialogue in which God confides in him, Moses also learns how to pray: he balks, makes excuses, above all questions: and it is in response to his question that the Lord confides his ineffable name, which will be revealed through his mighty deeds.” CCC 2575.

\(^{22}\) “I established my covenant with them [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]...” Exod 6:3, see also Matt 9:1-8 (spiritual/physical aid)

\(^{23}\) “...there is no reference to God’s hardening the heart of Pharaoh until after the sixth plague is well under way. There are only two references (9:34, 35) to Pharaoh hardening his own heart after God’s hardening is done. And surely it is significant that even after God has hardened Pharaoh’s heart (9:12), Pharaoh at least once more, can harden his own heart (9:34). But after that God, and God alone, does the hardening (10:20; 10:27; 11:10). It is as if Pharaoh’s window of opportunity has slammed shut.” Hamilton, Handbook on the Pentateuch, 164.

\(^{24}\) “There is undoubtedly a crescendo movement in the narrative... Moses, at first courteous, becomes more and more outspoken; Pharaoh, at first indifferent, shows an increasing inclination to temporize and to yield” Power, “Exodus,” in A Catholic Commentary, 212.
The Firstborn males will be henceforth consecrated to God (belong to Him). They must now be redeemed after birth (bought back). (13:11-15, see also Luke 2:22-24)

- Pharaoh finally allows Israel to leave, and even asks for their blessing! (12:31-32)

How Does This Relate to Christ?

- Christ is the new Moses, sent to deliver us from spiritual slavery. (Heb 3:1-6\textsuperscript{25}, CCC 530, 2574)
- Christ is God revealed, calling us to mission (John 8:58\textsuperscript{26}, CCC 211, 240, 2858).\textsuperscript{27}
- Christ is the Lamb of God. His blood protects us from the destroyer. (John 1:29\textsuperscript{28} CCC 608, 613)

Session One Reflection Questions

1. How is Jesus calling you out of the slavery of sin? What sacrifices must you make in order to follow him?
2. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of who God is and he asks us to trust him. What excuses do you need to lay at his feet in order to pick up your cross?
3. The people of Israel were instructed to put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts for the entire world to see, identifying them as followers of the God of Abraham and enemies of the gods of Egypt. Do we have the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, on our doorposts? How can we be better at identifying ourselves as followers of Jesus in an increasingly secular society?

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\textsuperscript{25} “Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house.”

\textsuperscript{26} “...before Abraham was, I Am.”

\textsuperscript{27} “Concealed within the name of Jesus is the tetragrammaton [YHWH], the mysterious name from Mount Horeb, here expanded into the statement: God saves. The, as it were, ‘incomplete’ name from Sinai is finally spoken. The God who is, is the saving God, now present. The revelation of God’s name, which began in the burning bush, comes to completion in Jesus (cf. Jn 17: 26).” Benedict XVI, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives} (trans. P. Whitmore; New York: Image, 2012), 30.

\textsuperscript{28} “... Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!”