

Summary of August 26

In this class we covered Chapter 16 of St. John's Gospel. We began by reviewing Chap. 13 to ensure we understood the context of our Lord's Farewell Discourse during the Mystical Supper on the night before His betrayal and crucifixion. We discussed what our Lord meant by the Apostles being "made to stumble." The word for "stumble" in Greek is: σκανδαλίζω skandalízō, skan-dal-id'-zo; meaning (figuratively), to trip up, to make stumble, to entrap or entice to sin, to offend. Our Lord is saying He has warned them about what is coming (i.e. His Crucifixion) so that when it happens it will not cause them to stumble or lose their faith. The mention of being put "out of the synagogues" is most probably a reference to excommunication. We also recalled Who "the Helper" is that our Lord refers to and the work of the Holy Spirit once our Lord would be leaving them.

Verses 16:12-13 make reference to the Church. The Church remains in the same faith revealed by Jesus Christ and confirmed by the Holy Spirit. This faith, as St. Jude states, is "once for all delivered to the saints" (v.3). So when we speak of this faith as being Holy Tradition, the word tradition simply means "handed down." The Scriptures themselves are part of Holy Tradition b/c they themselves are handed down to us through the Church. In verses 16:14-15 we noted how many Divine persons are mentioned and who these persons are (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). The Church's Trinitarian Faith springs from the pages of the New Testament as well as from the Faith passed down through Tradition.

In verses 16:19-24 we noted how the world rejoices when Christ appears to fail. The same is true about the Church today. As St. John Paul said, the Culture of Life is in a struggle with the world for a culture based on life, beauty and human dignity -all of which are rooted in God. So we need to remember these words whenever the Church is going through trials (or ever ourselves personally). If we bare them patiently and faithfully, the Lord will bring out from them a much greater good than we ever could've imagined. Our Lord's words, "Your joy no one will take from you..." remind us that the more God becomes the center of our lives, the more He is our joy, the less will anyone be able to take our joy from us. This is why Christians have been able to find joy in the harshest of situations and conditions (even during persecution and martyrdom). If we seek first Jesus and His kingdom, it will be granted to us.

We noted in verses 16:31-33 how, just as in the other Gospels, before the arrest and crucifixion the disciples express their faith in Jesus as the Son of God. But their faith will soon be shaken. Finally in 16:33 we pointed out the Greek word which our Lord used for "overcome." The Greek word is νικάω nikáō, nik-ah'-o; (Nike = Nee'-kay). It means to subdue (literally or figuratively):—conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory. This is where we of the Byzantine Tradition get the abbreviation: IC XC NIKA. Our Lord has conquered the devil and the world. Like the disciples, we can expect to encounter trials and tribulation in the world (and with the world) but we must remember to be of good cheer, as our Lord said, because He has overcome the world! IC XC NIKA = Jesus Christ Conquers!

Glory to Him forever!
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