



CHAPTER 24: 40-56

The Gospel of Luke

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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Luke 24: 40-56

Ver. 40.—*And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet—*“pierced, and still bearing the prints of the nails,” says Euthymius; as is clear from S. John xx. 27. For Christ willed that these five wounds, or rather wound-prints, should remain in His glorified body as trophies of His victory over sin and death and hell.

“He bore them with Him to heaven,” says S. Ambrose, “in order to show them to God the Father, as the price of our liberty.” For “He who destroyed the kingdom of death would not efface the signs of death.” In like manner also the martyrs will exhibit their scars in heaven, as so many glorious tokens of their victory.

For they will be to them not a disfigurement but dignity, and in their bodies a certain beauty will shine forth, a beauty not of the body, but of merit; for such marks as these must not be accounted blemishes. S. Augustine (*De Civit. Lib. xxii. cap. xx.*) You will ask whether the disciples actually handled and touched the pierced hands and feet of Christ after His resurrection?

of the Holy Spirit, for before His coming they remained at home for fear of the Jews, or we may take it absolutely, for the upper room in which they dwelt was near the temple, so that they could easily go to and fro. Acts i. 13.

In midst of prayers and praises, with eager preparation of heart, they waited for the promise of the Spirit, says Bede, who also observes “that S. Luke, who commenced his Gospel with the ministry of Zacharias, the priest in the temple, very fitly concludes it with the devotion of the Apostles in the same holy place. For he has placed them there, about to be the ministers of a new priesthood, not in the blood of sacrifices, but in the praises of God, and in blessing.”

Morally, the Apostles and the disciples teach us by their example to make the Christian life a perpetual round of praise to God and Christ. For thus we enter upon the life of the blessed, to whom the ceaseless praise of God is, as I have often shown, for everlasting their labour and their rest. “Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be always praising Thee.”

Ver. 49.—*And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you, i.e.,* after a few days, when the Feast of Pentecost is come, I will send you the Holy Spirit, who will teach you clearly many things besides these, and enable you to preach the gospel to all nations.

But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. δυνάμιν, i.e., with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for “as a general does not permit his soldiers who are about to meet a large number, to go out until they are armed, so also the Lord did not permit His disciples to go forth to the conflict before the descent of the Spirit.” S. Chrysostom in *Catena*.

Tropologically. S. Gregory (*Past.* iii 26) says, “We abide in a city when we keep ourselves close within the gates of our minds, lest by speaking we wander beyond them; that when we are perfectly endued with divine power we may then as it were go out beyond ourselves to instruct others.”

Ver. 50.—*And He led them out as far as to Bethany,* and from thence to the mount of Olives. Bethany was about fifteen furlongs [stadia] from Jerusalem, and close by the mount of Olives. Christ went to Bethany to say farewell to Lazarus and his sister, and to bring them with Him to mount Olivet, in order that they might witness His ascension, and share in His triumph.

And He lifted up his hands towards heaven, as if seeking a special blessing for his disciples.

And blessed them, signing them with the sign of the Cross, as Dionysius the Carthusian and others think. Indeed, S. Jerome, commenting on the words, “I will set a sign upon them,” Isa. lxvi. 19, says, Our ascending Lord left us this sign, or rather placed it on our foreheads, so that we may freely say, “The light of Thy countenance is lifted up upon us, O Lord.” For the Cross is the sign of Christ, which is the fountain of all benediction and grace. Hence the tradition which has come down from the time of Christ and the Apostles that in giving a blessing the hands should always form the sign of the Cross.

Therefore, says Theophylact, we should learn when about to leave our dependents or friends, to give them our blessing, and, signing them with the sign of the Cross, commit them to the keeping of God.

Ver. 52.—*And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* They rejoiced greatly because they had seen their Master triumphantly ascend into heaven, because they eagerly and without doubting looked for the promised gift of the Comforter, and because they had good hope that Christ would, in like manner, after they had laboured in the gospel cause, receive them to Himself, according to His gracious promise. S. John.

Ver. 53.—*And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.* “Continually.” We may either take this word to refer to the time of the descent

I answer that this is a matter of uncertainty, because Scripture is silent on the subject. But it is probable that some both handled and touched the Lord, especially those who were the more doubtful concerning His resurrection, because they, on their part, were anxious to satisfy themselves, by actual touch, that it was no phantom, but Christ alive from the dead—because also Christ Himself bade them “handle” Him, so that there might be no room for doubt, but that the Apostles might be able to preach to the Gentiles that Christ had indeed risen from the dead.

So we read, “That which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you.” 1 S. John I. i.

Ver. 41.—*And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered.* On the one hand, because they had handled Him, the disciples believed that Jesus had risen, and taken again His true body; but on the other hand, so great was their joy and their wonder at the strangeness of the event, that they could scarcely believe that it was the very Jesus who had been so recently crucified. They rejoiced greatly because they believed, but the greatness of their joy reacted on their faith. So it is a matter of common experience that if a trustworthy person brings us some unexpected good news, our joy is so great that we refuse to credit it, lest if it prove untrue, and we find that we have been deceived, we sorrow as much as we before rejoiced. We restrain our joy until we are sure that it is well founded. So was it with the Apostles: “their exceeding great joy,” says Vatablus, “obscured their judgment.”

Have ye here any meat? Christ appeared to His disciples “as they sat at meat” (S. Mark, xvi. 13), and they, when they saw Him, out of reverence rose up from the table and ran to meet Him, full of joy and astonishment, and therefore doubtingly. Hence, Jesus suffered them to handle Him, and since they did not even then fully believe, asked for meat, in order that He might eat before them, and so show that He was alive again.

Ver. 42.—*And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.* A proof of the frugality of the Apostles, for if they had had any better food they would have offered it to their Master. But as fishermen they fed on fish, just as Athæneus (*De Cœnis Sapientum*) tells us the frugal men of old were accustomed to do; and in point of fact up to the time of the deluge flesh was not known as an article of food. (See Gen. ix.)

Symbolically, says Bede, “the broiled fish signifies the sufferings of Christ. For He, having condescended to lie in the waters of the human race, was willing to be taken by the hook of our death, and was as it were burnt up by anguish at the time of His passion. But the honeycomb was present to us at the resurrection; the honey in the wax being the divine nature in the human;” and again “He ate part of a broiled fish, signifying that having burnt by the fire of His own divinity our nature swimming in the sea of this life, and dried up the moisture which it had contracted from the waves, He

made it divine food of sweet savour in the sight of God, which the honeycomb signifies. Or we may take the broiled fish to mean the active life drying up the moisture by the coals of labour, and the honeycomb is the sweet contemplation of the oracles of God." Theophylact. "By the command of the law the passover was eaten with bitter herbs, but after the resurrection the food is sweetened with a honeycomb." Gregory Nyssen.

Tropologically, says the Gloss: "Those who endure tribulation (*assantur tribulationibus*) for the sake of God, will hereafter be satisfied with true sweetness."

Another reason why Christ ate the broiled fish is given by an anonymous writer in the Greek *Catena*: "The word of God as a new and unapproachable fire, by the hypostatic union, dried up the moisture in which human nature as a fish—because of its incontinency—was immersed, and set it free by mixture of His passion, fulfilling so sweetly this dispensation as to make ready sweet food for Himself; for the salvation of men is the food of God."

Hence Christ soon after He had eaten, breathed on the Apostles, and bestowed on them the gift of the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins. S. John xx. 22.

Ver. 43.—*And He look it, and did eat before them.* Christ truly ate of the food, and not in appearance only, after the manner of an angel "I did neither eat nor drink, but ye did see a vision." Tobit xii. 19. Yet He was not thereby nourished. So Theophylact says, "He ate by some divine power consuming what He was eating." Similarly, S. Augustine: "The thirsty earth, and the burning rays of the sun absorb water, each in a different way; the one because of its need; the other by its power." So D. Thomas and the Schoolmen.

The Vulgate adds, "*sumens reliquias, dedit eis;*" but these words, although in the Arabic, are absent from the Greek and from the Syriac versions.

Ver. 44.—*And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, &c.,* i.e. that I was to suffer death upon the Cross and rise again the third day. Acknowledge Me then as the true Messiah, inasmuch as My words have been verified to the letter. Or by a metonymy these are the words, i.e. the things which I spake to you, My passion, death, and resurrection, which ye see accomplished. These things therefore ought not to appear to you strange and unexpected, for they were predicted, not only by me, but in time past by Moses, and the prophets, and by David in the Psalms concerning Me.

Some think that S. Luke wrote these words by anticipation, and that Christ spake them not on the day of His resurrection but on that of His ascension. For it was then that He bade the disciples remain in Jerusalem (Acts i. 4), as Luke records, verse 49, going on in the verses following to describe the ascension. But perhaps the words were used on both occasions, the oftener to impress them upon the Apostles for the greater confirmation of their faith.

Ver. 45.—*Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.* He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, as He had done before at Emmaus. See ver. 27.

Christ did this both to confirm the Apostles in their belief, and to prepare them to teach and to preach the faith. For it was part of the apostolic office to expound the Scriptures. Hence what He here began, Christ perfected at Pentecost, by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Hence it is clear:

1. That Holy Scripture is not, as heretics say, easy of interpretation to all.
2. That it is not to be interpreted, as they contend, according to the letter, but according to the teaching of that Holy Spirit, which Christ bestowed upon His Apostles, which the Apostles delivered to the Church, and the Church has handed down to us. Hence S. Paul, 1 Cor. xii., tells us that God hath set teachers in the Church, and among the diversities of gifts numbers "the interpretation of tongues." And so in former times the Church had her interpreters, whose special duties are described by Baronius, vol. i. p. 394.

Ver. 46.—*And said unto them, Thus it is written* (Isa. liii., Ps. xxii et alib.) *and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, &c.* See how by these articles of faith Christ opened the understanding of the Apostles, to the acknowledging the Scriptures, which foretold these events.

Ver. 47.—*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, i.e.—*1. By His authority. 2. At His command. 3. In His stead. That the Apostles should continue the teaching of Christ, and spread the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins throughout the world. 4. In His name, i.e., in virtue of His meritorious death upon the cross, whereby alone God gives the spirit of repentance and remission of sin.

Beginning at Jerusalem. A command to the Apostles to commence their preaching at Jerusalem, and from thence to go unto all nations. Beginning" (*ἀρχαίμενον*, incipientibus, Vulgate). The Apostles were to begin their preaching at Jerusalem: 1. Because there the Synagogue was flourishing, and there the Church had its origin, for the old Jewish dispensation was transformed into the Christian Church by the preaching of Christ, according to the words of the prophet: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah ii. 3. And again, "Arise, shine; for thy light has come." Ibid. lx. (Vulgate). 2. Because Christ, with all the blessings He came to bestow, was promised to the Jews by the prophets, and Jerusalem was their chief city; and 3. Because David and Solomon had reigned there, and Christ, the son of David, had come to restore their kingdom, but in a higher and a spiritual sense (see Acts i. 4).

Ver. 48.—*And ye are witnesses of these things.* (See commentary on Acts i.)