THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF ST
JOHN THE BAPTIST
DUNNELLON, FLORIDA

EVANGELIZING NON-CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

By Fr. Emmanuel Akalue

Key:

1. Please, this presentation may appear long; yet concerning all that is important for evangelizing "Christians of Other Communions", it is not exhaustive.
2. Do not be scared about the length of this presentation. You do not have to read or study the entire content one-time. It is divided into sessions. This will assist you to read or study the content, at least, session by session. One session may be enough for one login.
3. You need to study the content as often as possible. In that way, you will absorb the content and grow in the ministry of evangelization.
4. Always pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment before you begin to read or study the materials.
5. Please, for questions, comments and clarifications: *contact the author at "emmanuelrev@yahoo.com."*
6. I wish you God's blessings. Amen.

SESSION 1:
Overview

SESSION 1: Overview of Outreach to Non-Catholics

Preliminary Observations: "Modern Samaritans"

The focus, here, is how a Catholic Christian can evangelize and help to bring non-Catholics into Full Communion. While explaining the blueprint Jesus provided us on how to proceed with initial evangelization, under the theme: "Evangelizing Catholic Christians", I identified Protestants as "Modern Samaritans", I stated as follows:

> The Church is the New Israel. To evangelize as Jesus did and instructed us to do, we must first put our house in order. While we should reach out to bring modern Gentiles (non-Christians) into the fold and to bring modern Samaritans ("Separated Brethren" or Protestants) into Full Communion, the first

> priority must be to seek out and restore the lost sheep of the house of Israel ("fallen Catholics").

Here is a detail consideration of why the "Samaritan" imagery is apt to portray "Protestants or Separated Brethren." **WHO ARE SAMARITANS? Why use "the Samaritans" to qualify our "Separated Brethren" (or Protestants)?**

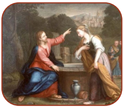
The Samaritans were originally remnants or descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Here is a brief background: Remember, during the reign of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, Israel divided into two kingdoms: the Southern Kingdom (comprising two tribes: *Judah and Benjamin*) and the Northern Kingdom (comprising ten tribes: *Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh*). Many prophetic oracles showed the division was contrary to the will of God and also anticipated the messianic fulfillment of the restoration of the tribes of Israel into one (Ezek 37:21-23). Though God punished the people of both sides for their sins, God sustained the covenant line *from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob… David, Solomon… to Jesus Christ* through the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Gen 49:8-10; Matt 2:6). Accordingly, none of the tribes of the Northern Kingdom was a covenant tribe or a line of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; they only belonged to the covenant people of God by association with the covenant God maintained exclusively with the Southern Kingdom, through Judah (the covenant tribe).

By application, Christ founded one and only one Church in Jerusalem, at Pentecost, in the First Century. It is the oldest Christian Church in existence, among all of the many churches today, the original reality FOUNDED by Christ. This same Church, same reality, then SPREAD "in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) under "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Eph 4:5); it did not begin anywhere else. *This Christian Church is the Roman Catholic Church (East and West); the true reality that began in the Roman Empire setting and spread to all parts of the world.* Hence, the Church founded by Christ *subsists* in the Catholic Church; other groups of Christians (Protestants) are Christians but not churches technically because Christ founded only one Church and decreed it shall be and remain "one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16); that is, only one Covenant People of God. No one has received a mandate from Christ to divide the one Church or to begin a new one. As in the above citation, Ezekiel 37:21-23,

division is contrary to God's will. Christ's eternal covenant promise concerning the only Church he founded is "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20). He has not changed his mind: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself" (2Tim 2:13). So Christ has not renounced his original Covenant family line established through St. Peter: "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).

The above helps us to place the Samaritans, in context, as originally remnants or descendants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, after the deportation in 722 BC, *"the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon… Cuthah… Avva… Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria*" (2Kgs 17:24). Accordingly, the Samaritans became a mixture of Israelites and foreign exiles. Generally, they followed the religion of the ancient Israelites but many of the "foreign" Samaritans struggled with serving the Lord our God (cf. 2Kgs 17:40-41). The Samaritans use their version of the Pentateuch, honor mainly Moses as a prophet, observe the Passover feast and regard Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem, as the proper place of worship (cf. Deut 11:29; 27:12; Josh 8:33; Jdg 9:7).

The Lord Jesus was favorably disposed to the Samaritans. Remember Christ's parable of the Samaritan traveler praised for his compassion and care to a man who fell victim to robbers (cf. Luke 10:30-37); His account of the ten lepers who were cured and only the Samaritan among them returned to express appreciation (cf. Luke 17:12-19); also, His encounter with the Samaritan woman (cf. John 4:3-42) and His specific mention of "Samaria" in how He envisioned the spread of the ministry of the Church: "*from Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).



I find "the Samaritans" an imagery apt to describe the relationship of the One Church to our "Separated Brethren" (Protestants). Obviously, this is not intended in a derogatory way. Notice how Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman illustrates why and how we can reach out to evangelize our separated brethren and help them attain the Full Communion willed by Christ. St. John states,

> He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there.... There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink…." The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (John 4:3-10).

The above shows Jesus engaging in an outreach. He knew the political, cultural, social and religious situation of the Jews and Samaritans. Jews and Samaritans did not get along during this time. There was mutual mistrust. They served God differently, though there were some beliefs and practices they "separately" held in common. As I mentioned earlier: Like the Jews, the Samaritans use the Pentateuch, but a different version {this compares with the use of different versions of the Bible by the Catholic Church and other Christian Communions}. Like the Jews, the Samaritans honor Moses as a prophet but hardly accept other Jewish prophets {this compares with how all Christians hold some Fathers of the Church in esteem together, and some Christians reject others}. Like the Jews the Samaritans observe the Passover feast but regard Mt. Gerizim (cf. Deut 11:29; 27:12; Josh 8:33; Jdg 9:7), not Jerusalem, as the proper place of worship {this compares with how our separated brethren worship God but do not understand the "New Covenant Worship" of God in Spirit and in truth through the Sacrifice of the Mass (cf. Jer 31:31; Luke 22:20; 1Cor 11:25; 2Cor 3:6) and do not accept the primacy of authority through the first and only Church founded by Christ. In other words, they do not acknowledge Rome and the Pope.}

Jesus understood the tensions between the Jews and the Samaritans. Thus, He understood the challenges against "Full Communion" for the Samaritans. Yet, He did not allow that to diminish His mission. He came to restore all under one fold and one shepherd. Notice the creativity of Jesus in initiating a dialogue. When the Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus asked for her help:

"*Please, kindly give me a drink?*" The woman was understandably astonished and replied, "*Are you kidding me? How is it that you, a Jew, is asking me, a Samaritan, for a drink?*" Certainly, here, Jesus has provided us an example of how to reach out to other Christians, a template to promote Christian unity (ecumenism). He recognized the problem of division is essentially ignorance of the will of God. Thus, he said to her, "*If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.*" Many Christians do not know what God is offering; they do not know the kind of gift of unity Christ offers to His people in One Church as "one fold and one shepherd". See how Christ puts it,

> Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one…. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:11, 20-21).

What a gift! What a favor Christ grants to us the kind of unity in the Blessed Trinity! Christ's discussion with the Samaritan woman continues: Wondering how Christ will give her Living Water and does not even have a bucket to draw water, she asked,

> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle? (John 4:12).

This preceding quotation clearly shows the Samaritans were Israelites originally. Jacob was the father of Israel. So, here, Jesus was working for the gathering or restoration of the 'lost tribes of Israel." In simple terms, He was making the people of God "one fold and one shepherd" (John 10:16); He was fulfilling the will of God: "*I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms*" (Ezek 37:22).

Certainly, all Christians will quickly seek Full Communion if they realize what they are missing: "Trinity-like Communion". Indeed, as Christ puts it to the Samaritan woman, "*If you knew the gift of God….*" If Christians today "*knew the gift of God, and who it is that is* … [calling them to Full Communion], they *would have asked him, and he would have given* them the gift to attain this Trinitarian Unity."

> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly" (John 4:15-18).

Notice in the above the woman immediately opened up to Christ, asking for the gift of God, for the Living Water. But, not so fast! Here, we see certain conditions need to be met in order to receive God's gift of Living Water. How many times do we hear people supposedly claiming to speak for Christ, say, "God doesn't care what I do with my marriage or in my bedroom?" Now, we know better! Jesus is interested in the "bedroom". He is interested in the stability and permanence of our marital relationship. The doctrines and teachings of Christ and the Church about marriage and divorce are God's revelations, not human opinions. We need to serve God according to God's will, not according to human postulations. God wants us to keep His precepts and aspire to be holy. This is why, at Mass, we always announce "Holy Communion is for baptized and practicing Catholics who are in the state of grace." As St. Paul rightly instructed, "*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord…. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself*" (1Cor 11:27-29).

Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman goes on: She moved the discussion into a very sensitive area, one of the core areas of disagreement between the Jews and Samaritans, saying,

> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim]; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:20-22).

This above aspect is very important. It is not just about Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem. The real question is about the will of God concerning how we should worship God. Are the Samaritans worshipping in the proper way or are the Jews worshiping in the right way? Who is right? Is any group free to have it any way the group pleases? Is it a question of striving to understand and comply with God's revelation in Sacred Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition or a question of ignoring God's word and worshipping based on "the Consensus of Human Opinions?" Notice Jesus played down on the location of worship; that is, he played down on the physical structures as such. Surely, there are essential and non-essential issues. Nevertheless, Jesus did not mince words when He declared to the Samaritan woman, "*Salvation is from the Jews*." It is in this context we must appreciate the teaching of the Church concerning, "Outside the Church, there is no salvation." It is not triumphalism. Christ was not being "triumphalistic" in simply pointing out the truth to the Samaritan woman. See how He puts it: "*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews*."

Let us explain what Christ means here: God is the one who decides what He wants. He is the Covenant-God. He chose Abraham and made His covenant with him (Gen 17:1-16), not any other person, however smart, handsome, prayerful, obedient, etc. Abraham had two important sons worth mentioning – Ishmael and Isaac. God chose Isaac as the covenant successor, not Ishmael (Gen. 17:21). In this immediate passage, Isaac was not even born when He was chosen. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. God chose Jacob as the covenant successor, not Esau (Gen 25:21-23). Thus, God revealed Himself as "*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*" (Exod 3:6, 15; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Mark 12:26; underlining mine for emphasis). In this way, God proclaimed He is God of all those in the Covenant line of succession: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Perez…. David, Solomon… and Jesus Christ. Hence, Matthew and Luke presented us this covenant understanding by stating the genealogy of Jesus or the covenant line of Jesus' family tree (cf. Matt 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38). All must identify with those in the covenant line; through them God grants blessings to all. For instance, just as with Abraham God said, "*By you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves*" (Gen 12:3). It was by Isaac, Jacob… David, Solomon… and Christ, that all the families of the earth received God's

blessings. Since Christ is the fulfillment of this covenant line, He declared, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). And the Apostles proclaimed, "*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is from the tribe of Judah (cf. Matt 2:5-6) and is called "*the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*" (Rev 5:5). Thus, Christ meant it, in the most literal and spiritual sense, "*Salvation is from the Jews*." Truth is truth!

Furthermore, Jacob was named Israel (cf. Gen 32:28); from him we have his descendants, the Israelites. Only Israelites were the covenant people of God in the Old Testament times. Ishmael's descendants are the Ishmaelites; God has no separate covenant with them. Esau's descendants are the Edomites; God has no separate covenant with them. Thus, if they want to worship the Covenant-God, they must identify with the Israelites and worship the God of Israel. Also, within Israel, the descendants of Jacob, the only inheritor of the covenant succession is Judah (cf. Gen 49:8-10); simply put, the Jews. If other tribes of Israel want to worship the Covenant-God, they must worship Him by identifying with the covenant God made with the Jews through Judah. God has no separate covenant for the rest of the eleven tribes. Accordingly, Jesus declares to the Samaritan woman, "*You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews*."

Similarly, we should not be afraid to, respectfully, point out to our separated brethren Christ grants us His salvation through the New Testament Church (that is, the "New Covenant Church") He founded: "*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.* ***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven***" (Matt 16:18 -19). This is the Church which began in Jerusalem, in the Roman Empire, and has been spreading to all nations; not any other "church." No one has any faculty to divide the Church or to begin a new one. This is the truth: the Church is a covenant reality; only God can found His covenant people. The Church is not like a hospital or clinic or a school or business center which any Tom, Dick and Harry can found. Only God establishes the Covenant Reality! Only God enjoys the prerogative; it is completely beyond the human power or origin. Consequently, we have an obligation to evangelize and clarify to Christians of other communions they are "Christians" by virtue of baptism, but they are not "churches." None of the founders or reformers has any mandate from Christ to found a "church." See how the Samaritan woman responded to Christ presentation of the truth about religion:

> So the woman left her water jar, went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the city and were coming to him. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." (John 4:4-42).

We see from the above the woman accepted Christ's words, and immediately carried out a campaign to evangelize fellow Samaritans: "*Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?*" Many Samaritans became disposed to listen to Jesus, experienced His word, accepted the truth, became transformed and declared, "*We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world*." How marvelous! Who could have predicted Samaritans would accept a Jew as their Savoir and the Savior of the world! Think about how humbling an experience it must have been to accept and admit this truth. Humility is the way all of us MUST go. If Christ humbled himself to become man, to suffer and to die on the cross for our salvation, why should any Christian refuse to take a look at divided Christendom and seek Full communion in His Church, in humility, obedience, and love? Catholic Christians have a responsibility to reach out like Christ to bring all into proper relationship as God wills it: "*One fold, one shepherd*." Our former Christians of other communions who have already come into Full Communion with the One Church can act like the Samaritan woman and help others to come and experience the fullness of unity: "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism*" (Eph 4:5). May God's will prevail, for in God's will is our peace. Amen.

Prayer for Unity:
Almighty God and Father, we beg you to bend our hearts to your will. Forgive us our sins of division. Help us to be ready to make amends that we may worship you as you will, not as we want or prefer to do. Grant us the anointing of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Unity and Truth, that we may work for the unity of your Church according to your irrevocable will. May we repent of our pride and yield to the glory of your Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Questions, Comments and Clarifications:

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SESSION 2:

SESSION 2: Catholics need Biblical Knowledge for any Meaningful Dialogue with Protestants

Generally, in dialogue with many non-Catholic Christian groups and sects, they never accept any other sources of explanation of the faith except the Bible. They dismiss many relevant sources – Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Documents of Vatican II, the Papal Documents, etc – as human ideas and insist on Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*). Of course, they are wrong; but somebody has to explain it to them in a humble and loving manner. Drawing on this, they often challenge Catholics to clarify their stand ONLY from the Bible. Unfortunately, this becomes a major "pit fall" for many Catholics. And it should not be that way.

Many Catholic Christians do not read the Bible privately; the only acquaintance with the Scripture is the regular readings during the Liturgy. That is not enough! We also need to have a private biblical and spiritual life: "*All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work"* (2Timothy 3:16-17). Catholic Christians should always take advantage of Bible Study sessions organized in many parishes. ***It is highly improbable that any Catholic could evangelize a Protestant or an Evangelical without the "functional" knowledge the Bible***. Scripture says, "*Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching [word] of Christ*" (Romans 10:17). The same **Christ Eternal** (with God in heaven before time began) is the same **Christ Incarnate** (and born of the Virgin Mary in time) and is the same **Christ Inspired** (in the Sacred Scriptures). Hence, St. Jerome rightly said, "Ignorance of the Scripture is Ignorance of Christ." See how Jesus Christ himself underlines the indispensable place of Scripture in evangelization: "*These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that **everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms** must be fulfilled"* (Luke 24:44). Catholic Christians need to be taught and reminded that the Catholic Church remains the first Church to have contact with the Bible. In fact, through her Apostolic (Sacred) Tradition in 393AD, she was the singular instrument of God in canonizing the writings of the New Testament as Sacred and Inspired and making them equal in dignity as Scripture as the Old Testament writings.

From the above, therefore, when our Protestant brothers

and sisters challenge Catholic Christians to clarify their faith on biblical grounds, they have a point. Certainly, the official teaching of the Catholic Church is that revelation comes from God and is contained in Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Tradition. Why then should a Catholic shy away from the Sacred Scripture (Bible)? Our Protestant and Evangelical brothers and sisters may not be experts in the interpretation of many passages of the Bible and their theological conclusions may not be right; but at least, most of them are reading the Inspired Word frequently. According to Vatican II, we should NOT "forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification". Until we evangelize and bring them into proper understanding of the intimate connection of Scripture and Sacred Tradition, they will always hold Catholics accountable ONLY on biblical grounds. What more pressure could be applied to challenge many Catholics to change the *status quo* of "insufficient biblical worldview?" The Second Vatican Council tried to get Catholic Christians to respond to "the signs of the times"; declaring that "the Study of the Sacred Scripture is the soul of Theology". In fact, most documents of the Church since Vatican II (for instance, the Documents of Vatican II, Encyclicals, Apostolic Exhortations and Apostolic Letters), are loaded with biblical citations. This is the new trend the Church is advancing in this new springtime of spreading the faith. Catholic priests, deacons and the religious have a responsibility for implementing this reorientation in their areas of assignments. Please, every Catholic Christian must advance in the knowledge of how to employ the Scripture to appreciate the Catholic faith and also for evangelization of our other brothers and sisters.

Prayer for Unity:
Almighty God and Father, we beg you to bend our hearts to your will. Forgive us our sins of division. Help us to be ready to make amends that we may worship you as you will, not as we want or prefer to do. Grant us the anointing of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Unity and Truth, that we may work for the unity of your Church according to your irrevocable will. May we repent of our pride and yield to the glory of your Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SESSION 3:

SESSION 3: Biblical Case for Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium (Official Teachers)

Catholics should read the Bible profusely and employ the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the official teaching of the Church, for understanding its proper interpretation. Unlike what our Protestant brothers and sisters practice in their insistence on Bible alone, notice that the Early Catholic Christians followed the official teaching of the Church/Apostles: "*So those who received his word were baptized…. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"* (Acts 2:41-42). It did not say they followed their private interpretation of the Bible. In fact, the Bible obliges us not to follow personal or private interpretations, saying, *"First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation"* (2Peter 1:20). Rather, as St. Paul insists below, we should follow the official teaching of the Church, the "pillar and safeguard of the truth":

> *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.* ***Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion****: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1Timothy 3:14-16).*

Also, St. Peter, in substantiating St. Paul's position, insists that we should follow the official teachings of the Church in these words:

> *So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures" (2Peter 3:15-16).*

Some non-Catholic Christians are confused by the statement: *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God'"* (John 6:45). Please, there is no confusion here. God teaches us through His Church. Notice the context in which Christ promised to found His Church and how the role of the Church as "the pillar of the truth" is implied in the context.

> *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-19).*

In the above, "men" or the "people of the world" were mistaken about Christ's true identity. Simon Peter, already chosen beforehand to be the leader of Christ's Church (cf. John 1:42), received a special revelation from God and responded correctly. Accordingly, he was commissioned as the one through whom Christ will build his Church. This Church, therefore, has the principal role of teaching the truth about Christ to the people of the world. Christ bestowed on his Church through Peter (a human being) the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven. Hence, Christ stated, *"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16).*

Some of our separated brethren make reference to St. Paul's statement after his conversion,

> *For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ..... I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus" (Galatians 1:11-12, 16-17).*

They claim that St. Paul did not undergo instruction; so they also do not need instruction. First of all, Paul was an apostle, not a lay member of the Church. St. Paul was simply speaking in reference to the initial proclamation of Christ as Lord. At this time, he has not even received the trust of the Apostles:

> *And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord (Acts 9:26-29).*

St. Paul proceeded to inform us that he constantly went to consult and verify his teaching with St. Peter and the Apostles. Then he shows us how the Apostles gave him approval:

> *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother…. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.* ***I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain….*** and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship *(Galatians 1:18; 2:1-2, 9).*

Prayer for Unity:
Almighty God and Father, we beg you to bend our hearts to your will. Forgive us our sins of division. Help us to be ready to make amends that we may worship you as you will, not as we want or prefer to do. Grant us the anointing of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Unity and Truth, that we may work for the unity of your Church according to your irrevocable will. May we repent of our pride and yield to the glory of your Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SESSION 4: Christ's Will – One Fold, One Shepherd:

Notice, from the above that St. Paul did not found a personal Church. He worked with the Apostles in the one and only one Church. That is the way any Christian should aspire to evangelize; all must enter into Full Communion with the one Church, according to the will of Christ the Lord. Nevertheless, some are confused about the biblical passages:

> *And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16).*
>
> *John said to him, Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us."But Jesus said, Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us (Mark 9:38-40; Also, Luke 9:49-50).*

Now, **what about the "other sheep"?** Please, note that Jesus DID NOT SAY, *"I shall have other sheep"*; he said, "*I have other sheep*" (John 10:16); that is, present tense, not future tense. No other Christian 'church' existed at that time. The other sheep referred ONLY to "Jews" and "Gentiles" that Christ brought in to join the one fold (*Please, Read Ephesians 2:11-22*); not to form a different group. **What about the man casting out demons**? The man the Apostles saw casting out demons in Christ's name was not founding a church. Is praying against the Devil equivalent to the founding of a church? Not at all! Only Jesus can found the Church; no human being can found Christ's Church. And only Peter was chosen as the principal instrument for the foundation of the one and only one Church. That is what the Bible stated; no more, no less!

Remember, the Church is the New Covenant People of God; only God makes covenant with us and dictates the terms. Covenant is a solemn agreement or bond between two parties, which establishes bonds of sacred kinship; Father-son, brother-brother or even man-wife familial ties. In the biblical covenant God is not just the superior party, he initiates and dictates the terms. As Pope John Paul II stated, covenant "is a completely sovereign initiative of God the Creator…." Can you find any passage of the Bible where Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Peter, summoned God to a covenant? Please, human beings do not make a covenant for God. This means there is no second or third church. What we have is our Christian brothers and sisters who left home; we pray they return soon.

Thus, the point in the references under consideration is this: Apparently, the Apostles taught only they could cast out demons and pray for the sick. Christ corrected that and stressed others (lay people, deacons and priests) can work with the Apostles and Bishops: "*Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you"* (Luke 9:50). Thus, the man casting out demon, a **Lay Member** of that first church, was simply praying for the sick and the possessed. This is consistent with Christ's original mandate given to the apostles, which indicates where the rest of us (others) come in to collaborate with them:

> *[APOSTLES ONLY]: Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table…. And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:14-16).*
>
> *[THE REST OF US]: And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mark 16: 17-18).*

Prayer for Unity:
Almighty God and Father, we beg you to bend our hearts to your will. Forgive us our sins of division. Help us to be ready to make amends that we may worship you as you will, not as we want or prefer to do. Grant us the anointing of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Unity and Truth, that we may work for the unity of your Church according to your irrevocable will. May we repent of our pride and yield to the glory of your Name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Questions, Comments and Clarifications:
Please, contact us at emmanuelrev@yahoo.com.

Notes and References

[1] Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4

[2] Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum* 24

[3] Scott Hahn, *A Father who keeps his Promises,* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1998), p. 23

4Alan Schreck, *A Compact History of the Catholic Church,* (Ann Arbor, Michigan; Servant Books, 1998), p.32