

Consortio

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

SUMMER 2011

How To Know God

A theological faculty should contribute to unsealing the eye of the soul. *by Dr. Bernhard Dolna, Dean*



“By the eye of the soul” man apprehends things divine and interprets them to mankind, writes Aristotle (*De Mundo*, 391). And similarly, from a Christian point of view, St. Augustine confesses: “I entered into my own depths, with You as a Guide, I entered, and with *the eye of my soul* I saw the unchangeable light shining over that same eye of my soul...it was above because it made me and I was below because I was made by it.” (*Confessions* 7,10). *The eye of the soul* is for both the Greek philosopher and the medieval theologian the proper organ to “know” things divine - God. This organ needs to be unsealed in the hearts of the students as the great theologians teach us. It enlightens reason and introduces one into the revealed truth. It helps to shift one’s perspective in order to see the world from a divine point of view. God is then the center towards which all forces tend. He alone is the source, and we are only the flowing of His force. Therefore, it is one of the noble duties of a theological faculty to contribute to this unsealing. Our authentic guides are the great masters of Theology; the Saints and the Magisterial

teachings. They all convey a certainty of knowledge of God which is neither an abstract premise nor any physical experience but *an insight into the triune God, who is living presence, who is Love, and His search for man*. Hence, our seeking Him is not only our own concern but also His. God’s Will is involved in our yearning.

“I sleep, but my heart is awake. The voice of my beloved is knocking. Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove.” (*Song of Songs* 5, 2). The voice of the beloved is God, who calls. A rabbinic medieval interpreter adds to it: “Open to me an opening no bigger than the eye of a needle, and I will open to you the supernal gates. Open to me, my sister, because you are the door through which there is entrance to me, through which we get to know each other.”

Such knowledge of God, based on the *unsealed eye of the soul*, is what we aim to acquire through our formation of the person at the ITI. It is full of joy and the most efficient pre-condition for the new evangelization. ✂

Inside

- JPII Beatification
- GPS for Christians
- Christianity Meets Platonism
- Work of Healing
- Ideal State
- New Film and Blog
- The Pope and the Word of God

A Unique Mandate

After graduating from the ITI, Rev. Alan Boisclair receives a unique mandate to implement Blessed John Paul II’s Theology of the Body catechesis.



How were you introduced to the ITI and what made you decide to study here?

Originally, I was seeking advanced training in three areas: Theology of the Body, the Gospel of John and the New Evangelization. Immediately I noticed that it was very difficult to get all these choices in a single location. In checking around, it was Scott Hahn who recommended the ITI to me. I was fortunate that I was not only able to take a tutorial and the Theology of the Body (TOB) course from Dr. Michael Waldstein, but his Gospel of John course as well. This was life changing. I was fortunate to have a

continued on page 4



I Have Searched for You – and Now You Have Come

Rome had all the flags flying for the Beatification of John Paul II at the beginning of May. It was the first thing that struck my eyes as I entered the city. Each light pole had a banner with John Paul II on it – welcoming all of us. His image covered the city with posters and I even saw a taxi re-painted with the beatification message! The posters and banners quoted the last words of our dear Holy Father, “I have searched for you, now you have come to me. I thank you for this.”



Flags wave madly when Pope John Paul II is declared a Blessed.

John Paul II, had given the initiative to found the International Theological Institute (ITI), so my pilgrimage to this beatification was one of thanksgiving and petition; in Thanksgiving for the many lives God has touched through this education and in petition for JP II to continue to guide this work.

Our Beloved Holy Father, John Paul II, had given the initiative to found the International Theological Institute (ITI), so my pilgrimage to this beatification was one of thanksgiving and petition; in Thanksgiving for the many lives God has touched through this education and in petition for JP II to continue to guide this work.

The early morning light of May 1 was filled with streams of people all heading toward St. Peter's to join those who had spent the night there. Over one million people spilled down the Via della Conciliazione and through side streets. We were lucky to be in the Via with TV screens to bring the beatification close to us. We were even able to receive communion even though so far away.

Even though everyone was tired and uncomfort-



Three alumni meet from around the world to honor the man that had changed their lives: Josipa, Croatia; Sr. John Paul, USA; and Fr. Thomas Bolin, Italy.

able, people were helping their neighbors – getting water, offering a seat, passing out a Mass booklet or offering an umbrella from the hot sun. Tireless volunteers went up and down the streets to take care of the crowd. I am always amazed at how well Rome can handle a crowd with good will. I love the many small miracles that also happen – like unexpectedly running into people you know and having a joyful reunion.



At the declaration that John Paul II was a Blessed, the air erupted with the sound of cheers, shouts of joy and applause. Everyone was madly waving their flags and banners. I looked around and saw a sea of tears of joy. Then, another miracle; the streets became hushed and still and we all prayed to the new Blessed. His photo now smiled to us from the same window in which he first appeared to the world as the Holy Father.

I thought about the time he was first presented to the world as the new Holy Father, and that the world had no idea who he was. He then traveled through the world, “searching” for all of us, and now we were able to come to him and partake of his gifts.

Blessed John Paul II, we love you! ✂



Thousands gather at the Circus Maximus for a candle-light vigil, in which, the life, virtues, and miracles of John Paul II were extolled.

Pope John Paul II traveled through the world “searching” for all of us, and now we are able to come to him and partake of his gifts.

By Ginger Mortensen, reprinted with permission from www.CatholicBusinessJournal.biz

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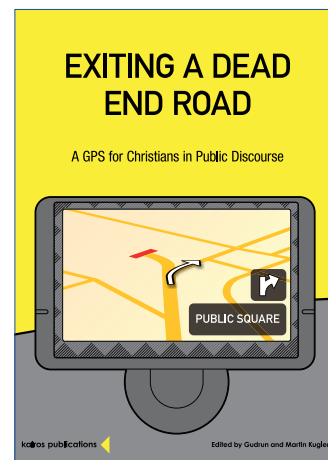
Alumna Publishes Landmark Book

Exiting a Dead End Road. A GPS for Christians in Public Discourse

ITI faculty member and alumna, Gudrun Kugler, together with her husband Martin, recently published the book, *Exiting a Dead End Road. A GPS for Christians in Public Discourse*. In describing the book, Gudrun writes:

“In the public debate today, Christians quickly encounter a ‘dead end road’: Of course, no one should be discriminated against – but is *anti-discrimination legislation* a good idea? Why do many call Christians *intolerant*, isn’t it the Christians’ positions which are not being tolerated? *Exiting a Dead End Road. A GPS for Christians in Public Discourse* discusses the main questions of public interest in a concise and accessible format. Dis-

tinguished experts offer their analysis and solutions to questions such as: “What’s Wrong With the West?” (Robert George, Bill Saunders), “Dealing with Political Correctness” (Marguerite Peeters), “Comprehending Freedom and Tolerance” (Rocco Buttiglione), and “Ways Out of the Ghetto” (Joseph Weiler), along with many other insightful essays. ✂



(2011, Kairos Publications, edited by Gudrun and Martin Kugler). You can order the book or download the e-Book at: www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu

A Unique Mandate

continued from page 1

course on the New Evangelization, from Prof. Rüsich. But two other areas of study entirely opened up for me at the ITI: I took two courses from Prof. Nicholas Healy on Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) which were amazing. Finally, the study of Romano Guardini, through Prof. Bernhard Dolna, inspired me so much that it became the focus for both my thesis and dissertation for my Sacred Theology Licentiate (STL) degree.

I found that all of the courses at the ITI were so well balanced and integrated, that there was a resonance between one course and another that was amazing.

How was your life changed by studying at the ITI?

After completing my studies at the ITI, I was out of rotation for being a pastor, so I worked in a remote parish as an assistant for one and half years giving courses on Theology of the Body, Romano Guardini and Ratzinger. From June 2008 to July 2010, I was pastor of a parish located in the Metro Vancouver area, so I began to give eleven week or twenty-two hour Theology of the Body courses twice yearly throughout the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

The response was so positive and overwhelming from the four full courses that I taught, that Archbishop Michael Miller, CSB, received hundreds of letters stating that I should be doing this full time. In July 2010, he appointed me full time Coordinator for the Theology of the Body Office for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, BC, Canada.

My mandate is universal; I am to integrate the Theology of the Body into all areas of the Archdiocese including: priests and religious, Catholic schools (elementary and high), marriage preparation, Natural Family Planning, catechists and religious education teachers, Catholic Faith formation groups, various youth groups, young adult groups, and men's and women's groups. I understand that this broad mandate is unique in all of North America.

So far, I have taught the full Theology of the Body course eight times in various parts of the Archdiocese, with the universal feeling from the participants of a profound sense of sacred awe and joy, combined with a slight burn of disappointment upon the realization that, if they had only learned this teaching years earlier, they would have avoided numerous painful mistakes in their lives.

I have seen the Theology of the Body change people's entire lives. I have witnessed it heal broken people of their wounded self image and similarly heal

bruised marriages. Recently, a young woman was so inspired that she joined Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity as a novice. At my last class, a couple in their 80's came to say: "This was awesome! It made our faith come alive and explained so many things that we had never understood before!"

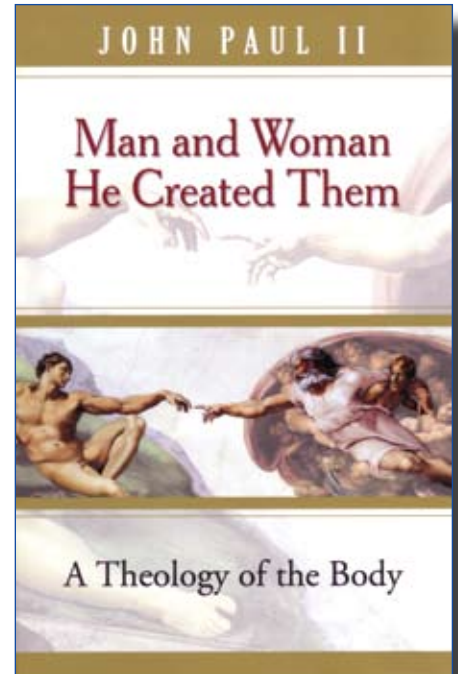
While I find that many priests and bishops still as yet do not understand how thoroughly life changing this catechesis of Pope John Paul "The Great" is, the response from the laity has been consistently overwhelming. I feel the swelling voice of many witnesses convincing their clergy of its importance, not only for married or single people, but for clergy and religious as well.

So far, I have only been able to give my fellow priests a twenty minute talk at their Deanery meetings, but have not as yet had the opportunity to give them an in-depth study day or workshop. In the meantime, I have gathered donors for a project: to give to each priest, currently on assignment for the Archdiocese of Vancouver, a four CD set, "Introduction to the Theology of the Body", for them to use in their cars, so that they can absorb this material in a convenient way despite their busy schedules.

What are you doing now?

I am currently offering six Theology of the Body courses throughout the Archdiocese in fall, winter and early spring.

I am giving various workshops to Catholic school teachers, so that they in turn can have an "adequate understanding" of being "created in the image and



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likeness of God” to inspire their students.

I am working on a modular, certifiable, Theology of the Body program for all teachers and youth coordinators for the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

The resounding “yes” from hundreds of people, young and old, has testified to the life changing importance of this teaching of Pope John Paul the Great.

How have your studies and life at the ITI helped you with your current work?

It is only through the ITI, through my Licentiate specializing in Marriage and the Family, that I am able to do the work that I am doing. I am deeply grateful to the professors and community at the ITI for their guidance and inspiration.

What is your vision for your work? How will it help your diocese?



Icon of the Wedding Feast at Cana done by an ITI student.

I feel a groundswell of eager and inspired people who, after taking the course and catching the fire, can't help but spread this Good News with burning love.

In addition to all the courses and programs already mentioned, my hope is to be able to reach my fellow priests with study days, workshops and hopefully a full study week, to saturate them with this pro-

found insight into our humanity and destiny. It is only when they finally get the full vision of “man in the image of God” that they will really understand and share the joy that Pope John Paul the Great meant for all of us.

Ultimately, I would hope to have an International Theology of the Body Congress here in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

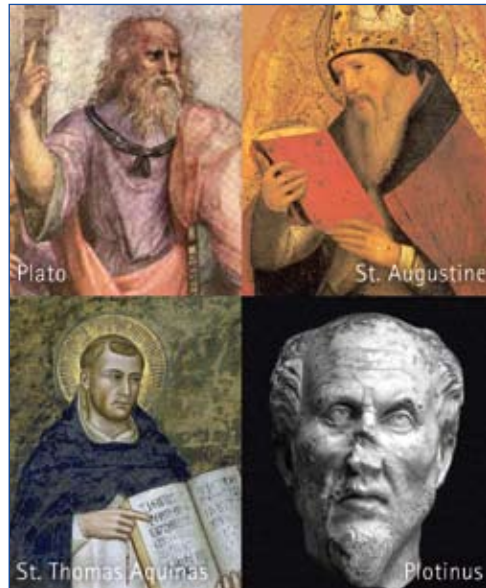
All this, thanks to the education that I received from the ITI. ✂

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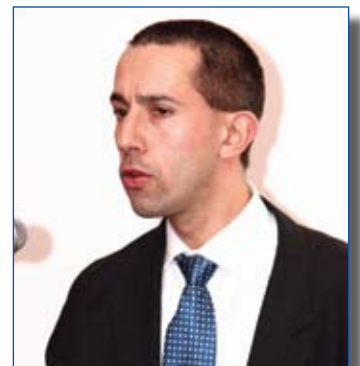
Christianity Meets Platonism

An international symposium at the ITI discusses age-old questions to find new insights.

Within the framework of this huge topic, “Christianity and Platonism,” a number of different and fundamental questions immediately come to mind: Can God be understood by pure reason? Is there an inseparable chasm between faith and knowledge or between freedom and grace? Are Christians and Platonists opponents – or do they virtually say the same thing? Are Christians and Neoplatonists enemies? Is there something like Christian Neoplatonism? Would the Platonists, to use an expression by St. Augustine, be Christians if they would only change a few words? Questions like these were discussed in the international symposium held by the ITI and organized by ITI Professor, Dr. Michael Wladika, in March.



The symposium brought together professors from the ITI, Dr. h.c. Heimo Hofmeister from the University of Heidelberg, PD Dr. Jan Kranat from the University of Prague, Prof. Dr. Bernhard Mutschler from the University of Ludwigsburg, and Dr. Gregor Bernhart from Vienna, as well as students from the ITI and Vienna, and a few trav-



Dr. Michael Wladika organized the symposium.

elling from abroad. Visitors coming to the ITI for the first time remarked how much they enjoyed experiencing the ITI campus community. ✂



Spreading the Work of Healing

First Rachel's Vineyard Retreat and Training in Austria

Theresa Burke, foundress of Rachel's Vineyard Retreats, came to the International Theological Institute (ITI) to run the first Rachel's Vineyard Retreat in Austria. After visiting and explaining this work of helping

One student from China was hidden after birth because of China's one child policy – for eight years he “did not exist” according to the state.

to heal the wounds left by abortion, a number of students contacted Theresa offering to translate the Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Manual into their native languages. Most of these

students came from Central and Eastern European Countries, where Rachel's Vineyard had difficulties spreading because of language barriers. All of the students at the ITI speak English, so it was the perfect opportunity to conduct a training for Rachel's Vineyard so that these students could take the retreat home with them when they returned to their respective countries. It was the perfect answer to a prayer!

Thirty people attended the Rachel's Vineyard Retreat training. Even though it was a training, everyone followed it as a retreat to better understand the process. Many students were grieving siblings who were aborted. A number of students had moth-



Dr. Theresa Burke trains ITI students and guests in the work of abortion trauma healing.



according to the state. He could not attend school or be seen until they moved to a new town and he finally entered school at the age of nine. The devastating perfectionism of the “wanted child” was also a source of grief work for a number of students who had learned you need to be perfect to stay alive, as they witness many children killed the minute they are born if they have any defects. Indeed, the need for healing the ripple effects of an abortion culture were starkly evident.

Despite the languages and numerous cultures represented, the group bonded together as the suffering body of Christ and moved through the grief into an experience of healing and resurrection – ready to spread the same good news to other lands. ✨

ers who had aborted every pregnancy except them, and they recognized the survivor syndrome inside themselves. One student from China was hidden after birth because of China's one child policy – for eight years he “did not exist”



What Should the Ideal State Look Like in the Third Millennium?

Hans-Adam II, the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, presents a lecture at the ITI on his new book.

Hans-Adam II., the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, presented his new book, *"The State in the Third Millennium"* to a standing-room only crowd on the ITI campus in March. His Serene Highness has the advantage of viewing the question from many different angles: as a head of state; as a politician who had to win popular votes in a direct democracy; as a businessman active in different continents; and, as a historian who has studied the influence of military technology, transportation, and the economy on the workings of the state. During the talk, Prince Hans-Adam explored ways to make the traditional democratic constitutional state both more democratic and more efficient.

After World War II, Liechtenstein was a poor agricultural country but has now developed and become an example of a state in the service of its people and not the other way around. The Prince gave examples of how to make this possible: the state should focus on the key responsibilities of foreign policy, security, law and order, and the executive power. Education should be financed by the state, but par-

ents should be able to choose the schools for their children using a voucher system. Social welfare should be taken care of at the community level, where it is closest to the problem, and so needs can be responded to better. He also said that such



Students and guests had many questions for His Serene Highness and his vision of the State.

a model state would need people who are already acquainted with democracy. Prince Hans-Adam was personally motivated to write the book because he did not want to become a monarch who only receives instructions from the government. ✂



Prince Hans-Adam II, Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein

The State in the Third Millennium

240 pages
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ITI? Enjoy the new ITI film on YouTube. This film was created over several months and includes interviews with His Eminence Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, professors and students.



A New Short Film, A Blog, and Facebook

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What are student and alumni events and interests? Look at the chatter on our facebook page.

Check out the new blog called *Vox Cervi* and keep

up to date with the current events at the ITI, interesting alumni news and reflections, and student thoughts. www.voxcervi.wordpress.com ✂



Pope Benedict XVI and the Word of God: Distinct Themes of *Verbum Domini*

by Prof. Vincent DeMeo

That a world-class biblical theologian sits on the chair of Peter as Pope is an extraordinary event in the history of the Catholic Church. The writings of Pope Benedict XVI continually manifest his devotion to the word of God¹ and its eminent place in the Church.

Verbum Domini is no exception—it is an expansive, all-encompassing text (the Libreria Editrice Vaticana/Vatican Press edition is close to 200 pages and includes 382 footnotes!), the cumulative effect of which leaves the reader with the impression that Pope Benedict is very confident in approaching the inspired word of God and that he appears to be very much at home in dealing with this complex, and often misunderstood, subject.

Purpose of *Verbum Domini*

Pope Benedict XVI's long awaited Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which was promulgated on the memorial of St. Jerome, 30 September 2010, was

written as a response to the Synod of Bishops who discussed the theme of *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* from 5–25 October 2008. Its aim is to gather up, examine more fully, and make known to the whole People of God the “rich fruits” which were born from the Synod's study of the word of God in the life and mission of the Church (§1; 121.1). This includes highlighting certain “fundamental approaches to a rediscovery of God's word in the life of the Church as a wellspring of constant renewal.”

This Apostolic Exhortation stands in continuity with the Church's tradition. It references many Church Fathers and Doctors, the liturgy, and par-

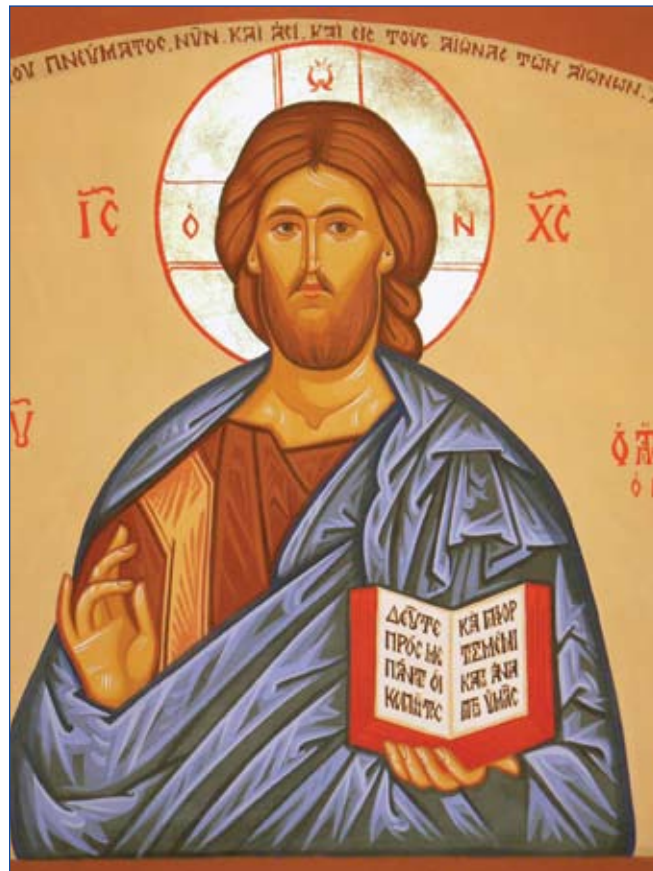
ticularly the various magisterial documents given throughout the last century, notably Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), and the culminating Dogmatic Constitution

on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council *Dei Verbum* (1963). As is suggested by the similarity of the Apostolic Exhortation's title (*Verbum Domini*) to *Dei Verbum*, it is precisely this milestone text that the Synod and *Verbum Domini* has as its point of reference. *Verbum Domini* is in full continuity with it and seeks, as its goal, to explain it more fully.

Distinctive Themes God's Word as His Testimony and the Testimony to the Word of God

In general, *Verbum Domini* is a testimony to the Scriptures as the divinely inspired word of God. Such a testimony is grounded

in a series of testimonies given by Jesus, the Scriptures, and the Apostles. Jesus himself, the incarnate Word, gave the primordial testimony to God: “Christ himself is the faithful and true witness... it is he who testifies to the Truth (cf. Jn 18:37)” (§98.1). In a similar manner, the sacred Scriptures—the written word of God—give testimony to the incarnate Word as the one who is equal to God having life in himself as the Father has life in himself (see John 5:39, 46; 5:18, 26). In turn, the Apostles and disciples testified to the incarnate Word of God (see 1 John 1:1-31 which runs as a central thread through the entirety of the Apostolic Exhortation).



When a believer reads the written word of God, he encounters a person—Jesus, the incarnate Word—not merely an idea, philosophy, or moral code.



Within this series of witnesses, and specifically in line with the testimony of the Apostles, the Synod Fathers desire to give their own personal testimony to the Word of God. At the heart of the Pope's Exhortation is the invitation to believe in the testimony given by many—from St. John the Apostle to the Synodal Fathers themselves—to the person of Jesus, the Word of God and the Word of life (1 John 1:1).

His invitation extends to belief in the testimony to Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, presented in the written word of God, the New Testament (see §2). The witness of the Holy Father and the Synod Fathers to the truth of the inspired word of God is rooted in the Apostolic witness to the incarnation of the Word of God. Commenting on John 1:14, the Pope writes, "The apostolic faith testifies that the eternal Word became one of us. The *divine Word* is truly expressed in *human words*" (§11.2). To achieve the purpose of the Synod "to renew the Church's faith in the word of God" (§14), the Pope refers to the "countless

testimonials" that were given during the synodal assembly to the truth of the Scriptures as the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit (see §98.1). He calls men to have trust in the reliability of his testimony and the testimony of the Church given time and time again throughout history.

Such a testimony is decisive for anyone approaching the word of God. By trusting in the testimonials of the Church, a believer becomes part of the living subject in the sacred Scriptures—namely, the People of God, the Church—and is able to experience them as words that are alive in the living subject. "As such, it is important to read and experience sacred Scripture in communion with the Church, that is, with all the great witnesses to this word, beginning with the earliest Fathers up to the saints of our own day, up to the present-day magisterium" (§86.2).

The Pope turns to the famous maxim of St. Augustine which recapitulates this general theme of *Verbum Domini*: "I would not believe the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church led me to do so" (§29.2).

Mystery of Covenant Dialogue: God Speaks to His Children and Responds to Their Questions

The essential content of the testimony of *Verbum Domini* is that God himself speaks in history to his children and responds to their questions. Arguably, this is the central theme of this Apostolic

Exhortation. This content expresses the sheer novelty of Christian, biblical revelation: "God becomes known through the dialogue which he desires with us" (§6). This dialogue is rooted in the eternal, trinitarian dialogue of love between God and his Word—the eternal, personal Word.

One of the first things in *Verbum Domini* that the Pope draws our attention to is the various ways in which God speaks his Word. God speaks in creating the world; he speaks through the inner call within the heart of man; he speaks his Word throughout salvation history. Most of all, the trinitarian God speaks through his Son, the incarnate Word, the definitive Word of God (Jn 1:14). On Jn 1:18, Pope Benedict comments, "Jesus of Naza-



Pope Benedict boldly and emphatically claims that an authentic understanding of the word of God essentially involves "faith-filled contact with the word of God" (§104.2).

areth is, so to speak, the 'exegete' of the God whom 'no one has ever seen'" (§90). "In a perfect way, he hears, embodies and communicates to us the word of God (cf. Lk 5:1)" (§12.2). The Father's word that Jesus hears and keeps becomes his very own word especially in the "word of the cross" (1 Cor 1:18) which is the word of the new covenant (§12.3). The authentic and definitive meaning of this word is manifested in the mystery of the resurrection. In this way, the beauty of the inner logic and unity of God's divine plan, in which he has spoken his word, has been fulfilled by the incarnate Word, Jesus the Christ—Jesus has died and has risen "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4). In Christ, creation, new creation, and salvation history are unified—they are all one Word.

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Distinct Themes of *Verbum Domini* continued

The one spoken Word of the triune God is handed on in the Church, in the form of preaching and writing, through the action of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15:26). “The word of God is thus expressed in human words thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit” (§15.2). Authentic understanding of the word of God only occurs through the Spirit of God (Jn 14:26; 16:13) who has inspired it. Pope Benedict explains the relationship of the word of God expressed in human words to the one spoken Word of the triune God through the use of analogy: the written word of God is rooted in the eternal Word of God. The one incarnate Word is inseparably intertwined with the word preached by the Apostles that is handed down in the Church’s living Tradition. In this manner, Christianity is not a “religion of the book”—it is a “religion of the word of God . . . of the incar-

nate and living Word” (§7.2). When a believer reads the written word of God, he encounters a person—Jesus, the incarnate Word—not merely an idea, philosophy, or moral code.

God the Father is the origin and source of this one Word. Benedict highlights how “God, the source of revelation, reveals himself as Father and brings to completion the divine pedagogy which had previously been carried out through the words of the prophets and the wondrous deeds accomplished in creation and in the history of his people and all mankind” (§20.2).

Thus, the Trinity speaks to the children of God through the Word; the Father communicates his Word to us in human words through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Essential to the dynamics of God’s spoken word, is our response to him. Not only does Christian, biblical revelation reveal that the triune God speaks

to his children, but it enables his children to speak with him. The word of God draws each person into a covenantal dialogue with God himself by teaching us how to speak with him, and demanding a

response, namely, “the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). Because “we were created in the word and we live in the word,” (§22.1; also §50) we are fulfilled by listening and responding to it (see §23.1). The reception and response to the word of God is transformative—through it a believer becomes a child of God (John 1:12). “Here we can glimpse the face of the Church as a reality defined by the acceptance of the Word of God” (Jn 1:14) (§50).

Biblical Interpretation: Ecclesial Hermeneutic of Faith

Another great theme that *Verbum Domini* addresses is biblical interpreta-

tion. In taking up the all-important question of how we can understand the word that God speaks to his children, this third theme manifests how our three themes are so closely related and how they interpenetrate each other. Pope Benedict is very clear that what is at root in biblical interpretation is the acceptance in faith of the apostolic, faith-filled testimonies to the word of God given by the Church from the first Apostles to Synod Fathers. Only through the obedience of faith to the Church’s testimony does the interpreter arrive at an authentic and full understanding of the word of God wherein God speaks to his children and responds to their questions. This hermeneutic of faith grounded in an “ecclesial spirit” (§47.2) is the foundation criteria *Verbum Domini* posits for guiding biblical interpretation (see §29.1-2).

Pope Benedict boldly and emphatically claims that an authentic understanding of the word of God essentially involves “faith-filled contact with the word of God” (§104.2). Echoing the words of St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas, the Pope insists, “without faith there is no key to throw open



“God Himself speaks in history to his children and responds their questions.” Reading the Bible by Hermann Kaulbach

Essential to the dynamics of God’s spoken word, is our response to him. Not only does Christian, biblical revelation reveal that the triune God speaks to his children, but it enables his children to speak with him.



the sacred text” (§29.1). Such faith-filled contact with the word of God overcomes the danger of a dualistic split between science and faith, and biblical exegesis and theology, that is caused by a secularized hermeneutic (see §35.1). He is convinced that faith is not opposed to a scientific, reasoned study of history, but rather includes the historical dimension since “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) in a particular period and place in history. Unity and right order between historical-critical methods and the hermeneutic of faith can, and must be, achieved for a correct interpretation of God’s word (see §44).

Although each believer is encouraged to read the word of God and appropriate it personally, one must avoid the risk of an individualistic approach which closes one off to the ecclesial community. The relationship between the word of God, faith, and the Church is key for Pope Benedict. He confidently and repeatedly claims that “a communal reading of Scripture is extremely important, because the living subject in the sacred Scriptures is the People of God, it is the Church... Scripture does not belong to the past, because its subject, the People of God, inspired by God himself, is always the same, and therefore the word is always alive in the living subject” (§86.2). Therefore, “the sacred text must always be approached in the communion of the Church” (§86.2; see §17.3).

Since the faith of the Apostles and their companions, inspired by the Holy Spirit, formed the living context for their literary activity, then it follows logically that “authentic biblical hermeneutics can only be had within the faith of the Church” (§29.1). In other words, since the primary setting for the word of God in its written form is the faith life of the Church, who is herself led by the Holy Spirit, then it can be concluded that “*the primary setting for scriptural interpretation is the life of the Church*” (§29.2; emphasis original). This is a fundamental criterion of biblical hermeneutics since it “is something demanded by the very nature of the Scriptures and the way they gradually came into being” (§29.2). He concludes, “the Bible was written by the People of God for the People of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Only in this communion with the People of God can we truly enter as a ‘we’ into the heart of the truth that God himself wishes to convey to us” (§30.1).

This has significant ramifications for one who seeks an authentic and full understanding of the word of God—they must follow the Word by living the life of the Church. Since the Church is the “home of the word,” (§52.1) the Scriptures are intimately related to the Church’s spiritual life, especially her sacramental and liturgical prayer life. The Eucharistic liturgy,

which is the source and summit of the Church’s life, “is the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives; he speaks today to his people, who hear and respond” (§52.1). “A faith-filled understanding of sacred Scripture must always refer back to the liturgy” (§52.2). In addition, interpretation of the word of God includes “listening to those who have truly lived the word of God: namely, the saints” (§48.1). The Pope remarks, “holiness inspired by the word of God thus belongs in a way to the prophetic tradition, wherein the word of God sets the prophet’s very life at its service. In this sense, holiness in the Church constitutes an interpretation of Scripture which cannot be overlooked” (§48.3). Saints, and those following Christ with authentic devotion (especially expressed in chastity, poverty, and obedience) become “a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word” (§83.1). Benedict takes up the thoughts of Origen who was convinced that “the best way to know God is through love, and that there can be no authentic *scientia Christi* apart from growth in his love” (§86.1).

Pope Benedict sums up this central theme of *Verbum Domini* through the inspiring and beautiful thought of St. Ambrose, “when we take up the sacred Scriptures in faith and read them with the Church, we walk once more with God in the Garden” (§87.3).

Conclusion

The great worth and importance of *Verbum Domini* lies in the strength of its testimony to the Scriptures as the divinely inspired word of God. This testimony includes a penetrating explanation of the key hermeneutic principles already given by the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei Verbum*: the principle of the Church as the living subject from whom and for whom the word of God has been written, and the principle of faith which not only grounds itself in history and takes up the scientific study of history, but also holds fast to the Church’s testimony that in the word of God, God has spoken to his children and responds to their questions. ✨

Endnote

1. When the term “word” is capitalized, it signifies Jesus Christ as God’s eternal Word. When “word” is not capitalized, it is used to signify sacred Scripture – the written word of God. This follows the convention of the Vatican’s English translation of *Verbum Domini*.



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Gift of Our Lady of Guadalupe



The halls of the ITI felt a bit empty and then one day Our Lady came to grace them. No, we did not receive an apparition, but something almost as good - a print of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Mexican Ambassador to Austria, Alejandro Diaz, graciously donated a copy of the original and it now fills an empty space with the much needed presence of Our Lady. ✂

Monsignor Dr. Larry Hogan, ITI president, blesses the donated image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

ITI Wins Football Tournament

The Catholic Universities Community organizes many activities and the ITI, on a lark, decided to enter their Vienne- sian Universities football/soccer tournament on May 6, 2011. To everyone's surprise, we won! Not having enough students for substitutions throughout the seven game tournament made the win even more phenomenal. Jude Edeh, from Nigeria, played excellent defense as the goal keeper. He was joined by other students from Mexico, Romania, Germany and the USA, and together they stole the championship! ✂



The ITI Football/Soccer Champions: Lukas, Germany; Jude, Nigeria; Emil, Romania; Maxwell, USA; Br. Alejandro, Mexico.

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