Symbolon Summary of Session 8 - Why do I need the Church?

“I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.”

How many times have you heard someone say something along those lines? In our day and age, that stance is popular, especially among people who have stopped attending church but who continue to believe in God (or at least a “higher power”). When someone tells us that they just don’t want to be tied to rules and regulations, or that they prefer to have a “personal relationship” with Jesus, but that they don’t need the Church, what should be our response? Merely telling them that they are wrong isn’t going to be convincing. We have to take the time to explain how religion and spirituality are intricately interwoven, as well as how Jesus never expected us to follow a spiritual path without a community: the Church. We need to point out that the truly spiritual life is, as Jesus himself said, like a vine in which he is the trunk and we are the branches. We are interconnected through our beliefs, our worship, and our desire to know and understand the truth. And once we understand the truth, we realize that it is as impossible to be spiritual without being religious as it is to swim without getting into the water.

When you enter the church you enter the family of God. It is about you Jesus and everyone else united with Him in the Catholic Church. The church is both human and divine. Jesus gave His Church human leadership that is visible, with public sacraments, and public teaching. God gave us divine leadership through Jesus, and God is using all of these to make his presence and his plan of salvation present in the world.

The church has four Marks to identify itself; One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The church is One. God gathers people in a common devotion, with a common set of beliefs. Jesus picked the apostles to lead his church, and he gave them orders to go and spread the gospel to the whole world. The church is holy not because we have chosen to associate ourselves with Him, but because Jesus chose to associate himself with us. The church is a community of sinners looking for redemption, Christ is the head and we are the members, and Jesus gives us salvation through the church. The church is Catholic, which means universal. Jesus saw fit to give to the church the fullness of His teaching. The church is Apostolic. We can trace the line of succession from Peter to our current Pope. Apostolic succession is shown in the Acts of the Apostles when a replacement is chosen to fill the vacancy of Judas.

However Christian denominations are divided in worship, belief, and leadership today. Is this the unity Jesus wanted? Believing in the bible alone presents problems, and one of the main is who interprets it. Without the teaching authority of the church, a singular authority you have each denomination, or even each person interpreting it themselves, and they can’t all be right. Jesus wants the church to be one just as He is one with the Father.

Enter into the family of God. The family with you, Jesus, and everyone else united with God in the Catholic Church.