



Week Leading up to 5.22.22: The Church & Teaching Authority

***(Start with reviewing the previous meeting's challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.)**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is with us.

Read: 1st Reading: **Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29**

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer: *Heavenly Father, we thank You for establishing the Church. Through the Church, You continue to be with us and lead us. We also praise You and thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom You teach and govern Your people. Give us the grace and gift of obedience to do Your will as expressed through the Holy Spirit. We ask this in the holy name of Your son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

Reflection or Discussion Question: (Leaders Note: consider reading these questions before doing the reading)

1. What word or phrase strikes you in today's reading?
2. What do you think/feel the Lord is saying to you today through this reading?

YouTube Video: Bishop Barron on Protestantism and Authority (8:19) - <https://youtu.be/RWYwBDqFsuE>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

3. For some people the theological conversation around Catholic versus Protestant can seem fussy and not practical, but the question of legitimate authority is truly of prime importance. As Bishop Barron says, "Who, finally, has the authority to interpret the Word of God?" Have you thought much about these questions before? Why or why not? (Leader note: A reference from *Dei Verbum* a Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation from the Second Vatican Council to support this quote, "But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. The teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divine revealed." DV 10)
4. Bishop Barron draws the analogy of a referee or umpire as crucial to the game in that their "living voice" allows the game to move forward and flourish. What do you think of this analogy when considering Church teaching and governance?
5. Another analogy which isn't perfect, but fitting is the role of good and loving parents. As we know, good and loving parents set guidelines, boundaries, and non-negotiables into their family/children's life. This positive parenting authority is at its best when it's expressed for the care and love of the children. How do you feel about this analogy and how it ties to the Church's teaching authority?
6. Why do you think so many people today fight or push against the Church's teaching authority?
Is there any Church teaching you find confusing or difficult to understand/believe? (Leader note: be cautious of getting into a "preaching" or "teaching" mode. It's best to listen and guide people, if possible, toward truth and invite them to follow up with their question to Mike Chamberland if they wish.)

Session Challenge:

- Spend some time researching the Church's teaching on some topics that you struggle with or find confusing. Start by referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church sections 888-892 on The teaching office. Utilize the Index and Glossary to quickly find any topics and themes you want to research. {It is highly recommended that every Catholic household own a physical copy, or you can search online at: [USCCB CCC](http://USCCB.org).}

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Lord God, all that is good is received from You as a gift. May we allow ourselves to be taught, governed, and loved by you through your Church. Amen.*

{Optional additional Readings} Reading 2: **Rev 21:10-14, 22-23**; Gospel: **John 14: 23-29**

Additional Reading on divine revelation and how it is handed on: Dei Verbum (the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation from Vatican II)