

Sacred Word

We have been sharing 10 lessons on Profane and the Sacred, Space and the Sacred, and Time and the Sacred. Each subject is rich and full of room for expanded thinking for us Christians. Now we are learning about Sacred and the Word.

Words, Speech, (spoken) language

“Words are important, if you cannot say what you mean, you will never mean what you say” Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston “ (1874-1958) A remark the English tutor made to the Chinese Emperor PuYi his student who can only say what he has been told to say. The power of communication through words, speech and spoken language are restricted in this case, though humans are naturally created to speak with each other. The universal communal communication of ‘speak and tell’ thus forms a universal basis of understanding by humans. For non Christians, their view is different from Christians. The believers and followers sense the spiritual reason that God's gift of language for men is to start the universal communication of the most important message from God the Father “the coming of Jesus, to save men from sin and damnation, and to bring them all back to the Kingdom of God.” These Sacred words from God are things in this world which cannot simply be expressed in the form of words.

In this class, we have been introduced to well known linguists, philosophers, theologians and other great men of present and past. Their theories and findings broaden and expand our horizons abundantly.

Noam Chomsky (1928-)who revolutionised the linguistics field by introducing the Chomsky hierarchy, generative grammar and the concept of a universal grammar, which underlies all human speech and is based on the innate structure of the mind/brain. His theory is that human beings are pre-wired to learn language and in fact born with the basic rules for language intact. Every country's language is different, but they have a common structural base, the set of rules known as “universal grammar”. These universal properties of natural human language place a relation of the most important belief of “the birth of the Saviour” to a common language of the ‘sacred word of God’.

Aristotle, (BC 384-BC322) a towering ancient Greek philosopher, was the father of western logic. He has shaped today's scientific method of analysis. On language, his writing on ‘The Art of Rhetoric’ is using language effectively to argue skillfully, using flowery language with ‘intuition of the persuasiveness.’ He stresses on the important points of furnishing through the speech, some reside in the character of the speaker, some in disposition of audience, some is speech itself [Logos]- reason/text, [Ethos] - credibility/writer, [Pathos] - values, beliefs/audience. In politics, as only humans have speech, the voice is a signifier of pleasant or painful feelings, and the speech is to denote the perception of what is good or bad, just or unjust and the rest.

Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835) German philosopher and linguist. As a language scholar, he believes that the diversity of human language structure and its influence is on the mental

development of mankind. Just as no concept is possible without language, so also there can be an object for the mind, since it is only through the concept, of course, that anything external acquires full being for consciousness. Humboldt's understanding is a world located between the outer world and the inner world of a human.

Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) a German philosopher whose vision is that scientific laws, religion, and language are all symbols created by the mind in attempting to produce a world of understanding. "What we call nature...is a poem hidden behind a wonderful secret writing; if we could decipher the puzzle, we should recognize in it the odyssey of the human spirit, which in astonishing delusion flees from itself while seeking itself"- Ernest Cassirer . His philosophy of symbolic forms, says Myth as a form of intuition. The construction and organisation of the Spatiotemporal World in Mythical Consciousness. So for him, the framework is the Configuration of Time in 'fictitious' Mythical and Religious Consciousness.

Carl G. Jung (1875-1961) Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, who had a period of collaboration with Freud. Jung talks about man and his symbols, and approaching the unconscious, there is the importance of dreams. A word or an image is symbolic and has a wider unconscious aspect not fully explained because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding . Jung believed all religions employ symbolic language or images, like spontaneously in the form of dreams. Our psyche is part of nature and it's enigma is limitless, therefore we cannot define either the psyche or nature most common mental derangement, 'the loss of a soul', meaning a noticeable disruption or technically, a disassociation of consciousness

Anastasia Giannakidou on the human and the mechanical; logos, truthfulness and ChatGPT speaks of veridicality, judgement, evidence, belief, truth. Anastasia states that human intelligence is of a different order than even the most powerful calculative ability of artificial computational systems' 'mechanical minds'. Human "Logos" (Greek word) has the ability of speech and ability to think rationally. ChatGPT lacks Logos, eg. the ability to form any kind of judgement

The story of Helen Keller (1880-1968) is very touching and remarkable as one who learnt communication of speech without voice, words, or sight.

Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) a Catholic who says that speech is truly the mirror of the heart. Just as the mysteries of Scriptures call on the highest mind, God, likewise they call God's only Son 'the Word' of that mind. The likeness of the begotten, not made, Jesus, is one in being with Father, utterly perfect. And there is no other object that more fully and clearly expresses the invisible form of the mind than speech that does not lie. Man now has been communicated with the Sacred knowledge and truth God wishes us to know.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) A Christian who claims that human life integrates itself in the life of the Spirit in such a way that human beings experience the Spirit as the unity of power and meaning

in life. Human beings experience reunion with the ground through the reuniting work of God. The category of the divine Spirit is the symbol for the divine power of redemption and healing.

Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) German theologian who is an unbelieving theologian. His discussions of God and faith illuminated and bound together the realms of traditional Christianity and modern culture/ He proposes that Jesus was not literally the son of God but just an expression of God. Bultmann disagrees with St. Paul said that if Christ is not raised, then faith is useless. He also developed a method called demythologizing to reinterpret the early Christian myths such as the incarnation and deity of Christ.

Ruth Nanda Anshen (1900-2003) she believes in convergence of religion, science, rationality, and emotion. She is a symbol of abiding loyalty and devotion.

Chu Bong Fu (1937-) inventor of Cangjie input method (computing). His ideal is art as his means of communication, going one A to B, without any barriers and interruption for spirit and heart to become one.

Tao Yuan Ming (approx. 465-427) He lived far away from men and forgets the art of speech. When he sees nature and the beauty of the mountains, birds in flight, he finds no words to express and yet based on his senses, he can say everything about the situation without words.

Zhu Guang Qian (1897-1986) He believes feelings, thinking, speech are three parts that should not be independent but Art is symbolic and hints on the limit and limitless.

Lao Zi (BC571-BC470) His ancient sayings, from the perspective of Christians, seems to mention the Almighty Father and the only Son and the relationship as one : Path within Path.

The Sacred Words of God

The Word of God is interpreted and spoken by man, for God has blessed the prophets to speak that which is His salvation plan for the world. For our Church, the Bible is God's Word. Our human intellect is far under the ability to comprehend and interpret in full. So the proclamations at mass with the intercession of the Holy Spirit engages us through our emotions and feelings of reaching a deeper understanding of God's word.

Birth of the Savior and the Sacred Words of God

God's words have thus entered into our history, speaking through man's language. The climax is Jesus the Christ.

God's word and Jesus are joined as one, and in the word, Jesus assures man of the forgiveness of God. Jesus is therefore the bearer of the word, and in the word, Jesus brings forgiveness. Whoever understands it and takes it seriously knows that there is no possibility of God's

forgiveness becoming real for man through the word. In the word, and not otherwise, does Jesus bring forgiveness. Jesus is sent from God, and the word of Jesus remains: "Blessed is he who finds no cause of offence in me."

The Sacred Word of God, of Jesus becoming flesh and blood, is not only in our Church's doctrine, the Word also evidenced the total victory of God in Christ, that through the Lord's life and death, the greatest Glory of God's love, forgiveness and redemption is openly bestowed upon all of us. We are forgiven, saved and renewed, inheriting eternal life as true sons and daughters of God.

Biblical Theology Thesaurus - The Word of God (Zhao Yi Zhou 1926-2015)

Jesus, the Son of God is the centre of man's history, before he came, man's history was waiting for his arrival as man on earth, now that he has been here, man's history faces and looks forward to His final victory unravelling. When Jesus first came, the darkness did not receive Him, the sinful world did not recognize Him, even His own people did not accept Him: this is the beginning of the final ending of 'Suffering of Jesus' in the entire Gospel. On the other hand, there are those who believed and from Jesus overflowing 'Cup of Grace', many were given blessings over blessings, until they were given the ability to become the children of God.

Jesus speaks to all men and awaits everyone's answer. Our answers are tied with the fate of eternal life. What the word of God poses as difficulties to our answers in whoever believes in God and receives His Sacred Word, must live a life as God's child: whoever refuses God's word, and does not accept the Sacred Word, will remain in darkness of their lives and may even be punished.

God said: "Let there be Light!" - and Light (Genesis 1:3) As Christians, we believe what God says has the power of creation.

The Lord called out to Adam: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) God takes the initiative to talk to man. In this case it was about human disobedience. There may be other details, and God will call man like He called Adam.

God said: "Now then, these are all one people and they speak one language; this is just the beginning of what they are going to do. Soon they will be able to do anything they want! Let us go down and mix up their language so that they will not understand each other." (Genesis 11:6-7) So for the current subject of ChatGPT, Fr. Ha realises our Bible foresees man's pride expanding like before and we are now alerted with the warning of how the world may be like in future when everyone speaks and uses the same language.

Jesus' mother then told the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Jesus said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water". (John 2:5,7) At Mother Mary's request, Fr. Ha illustrates that Jesus' word once spoken has the power to be done as spoken.

Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68) Simon Peter is asking and wishing for Jesus to bring him to eternal life after death on earth. He promises to follow Jesus and begs Jesus not to abandon him.

"Now, there are many other things that Jesus did. If they were all written down one by one, I suppose that the whole world could not hold the books that would be written. (John 21:25)" This is to say that Jesus' words are so much that it cannot be all recorded. The fact is that God talks with everyone of us, and the words will be quite too many to write down for so many people with so much history.

They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) The effect of the Lord's word is like fire in the hearts of strangers. God's word produces such astounding effects.

"I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell" {1 Cor. 13:1) For the disciple Paul's language must include the essential properties of 'love' when he speaks, otherwise it will only be the making of sound, and not of meaning.

They were all amazed: "How is it then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages?" (Acts 2:8) This is the Universal Grammar of Noam Chomsky relating to speech and language studies. From our Christian point of view, Logos is the word of God, and God's word is passed on through the disciples recorded in the Bible, with the disciples' proclamations and teachings of God's word. So everyone uses their own native language to learn and absorb the word of God.

Jesus said: "When you lift up the Son Man, you will know that 'I Am Who I Am'; then you will know that I do nothing on my own authority, but I say the only what the Father has instructed me to say. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him." (John 8: 28-29)

Jesus said: "Remember that all these things will happen before the people now living have all died. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Matt: 24; 34-35)

Jesus said: "What gives life is God's Spirit; human power is of no use at all, The words I have spoken to you bring God's life-giving Spirit. (John 6:63)

Jesus said: " I will prove to you then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!" (Matt:9:6)

Jesus said: " Jesus preached his message to the people, using many other parables likethese; he told them as much as they could understand" (Mark 4: 33)

Jesus said: “ And so I tell all of you: what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in Heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.” (Matt:18:18)

Jesus said: While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. “Take and eat it,” he said; this is my body” (Matt: 26:26)

Jesus said: At about three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why did you abandon me?”

Conclusion:

This has been a very inspiring class of religious study for me. I have learnt a lot and have very much enjoyed it, though the computer classroom has been a bit frustrating to use for a rookie like me. Our classmates have been most helpful, making the best of notes to help me along. As for Fr. Ha’s comments on thought of young Catholics baptised at birth, can easily slip into not being practising Catholics. Actually, Catholics are awakening with the passionate persistence of our Church revamping and diligently servicing their followers' spiritual needs. Many devout Church members of the clergy as well as parishioners are eagerly working towards improving believers’ better knowledge of the doctrine. The Bible does need to be read more, and prayers to be said constantly as talking with God. Keeping connected with our brothers and sisters in Christ helps a lot. Attending Sunday Mass, regular confession for forgiveness, and obeying God’s word, and to live like God’s child. The Holy Eucharist can bring us closer to Jesus each time we are joined with Him. On reviewing of the class contents, it is very important that we need to join God’s work with the Church he left with us on earth. Our attention to further work ourselves on the spirit of humility, the passion to obey God always, and a servant’s heart for all that God so love.