

Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church
Bible Sharing Program 2021- 22 (3Jn 1:1-15)
Session #10: Overview of 3 John; Handling
Conflicts Within the Church

CSB – Ignatius Catholic Study Bible
CCSS – Cath Commentary on Sacred Scriptures
SN = Special Notes
NAB = New American Bible
SK = Chinese Bible CCC = Catholic Catechism

A	<p><u>Overview of 3 John</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like in 2 John, the author identifies himself as “the Presbyter”. Four persons are figured in this letter: the author, Gaius (the addressee), Diotrephes (the one who opposes the author), and Demetrius (possibly the letter carrier). • This letter concerns relationships and conflicts in the early Church, especially Diotrephes, a leader who dominates like a dictator instead of leading like a shepherd. John hopes to denounce him face-to-face. • What value does this short letter offer? Why is it included in the apostolic canon? 	CSB, CCSS
B	<p><u>Opening Greeting & Commendation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like in 2 John, the author identifies himself as “the Presbyter” to show that he is not only an elder but occupies a unique leadership role, that is, the “elder” who is known within the Church. He addresses the letter to “the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth”. He sees Gaius as his brother in Christ and they share a bond in truth. • “Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” – Commending Gaius for “walking in the truth”. This is the English translation of the original Greek text, “walking in the truth”. Indeed, life is a pilgrimage during which we journey towards our destination in God’s company. May truth and beauty be your destination, an eternal joy and blessing in God’s house. The salvation story of God begins with a pilgrimage, that is, the journey of God calling Abraham and his descendants enter the Promised Land. We, too, are called to leave on a journey like Abraham who “went out, not knowing where he was to go”. Further, we are like “strangers and nomads” on the road who must firmly place our trust in God, walk in the truth, and eventually we will arrive at our Heavenly home, like Abraham and his descendants (Israelites) arriving at the Promised Land. 	<p>1:1-4</p> <p>1:1 CCSS</p> <p>1:3-4 CCSS</p> <p>Heb 11:8 1Pet 2:11, 2:3</p>
C	<p><u>Criticism & Recommendations</u></p>	1:5-12

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commending Gaius who is “faithful in all [he does] for the brothers, especially for strangers”. They have testified to Gaius’ love “before the church”. This is the first time that John has used “church” / “ekklesia”, a term that refers to a local church (appears again in verses 9-10). This is consistent with other NT writings. • Criticizing Diotrephes who “loves to dominate” and for his disobedience, “spreading evil nonsense about us ... he will not receive the brothers”, abusing his authority. John wants to condemn Diotrephes in person. “Demetrius receives a good report from all, even from the truth itself. We give our testimonial as well”. John wants to remind the leaders of the Church that they should follow Christ’s model of servant leadership that prioritizes service to the faithful. 	<p>1:5-8 CCSS Mt 10:40, 2Cor 11:7-9, Acts 14:23, James 5:14, Rev 2:1, SN1</p> <p>1:9-12, CCSS</p> <p>Mk 10:42-45</p>
<p>D</p>	<p><u>Closing Greeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have much to write to you ... I hope to see you soon, when we can talk face to face” – similar to 2 John => same author. • “Peace be with you” – This is particularly poignant in light of the conflicts experienced by Gaius and the division and strife within the local church. As the risen Christ blessed His apostles => no matter how great the difficulties and challenges are, the peace of God cannot be destroyed. • “The friends greet you; greet the friends there each by name” – Master and disciples called each other friends, treating each other with love, and are also willing to lay down their lives for each other. Such is true friendship in the Lord. 	<p>1:13-15 CCSS</p> <p>1:13-14</p> <p>1:15, Jn 20:19</p> <p>Jn 15:13-15, SN2</p>

Special Notes:

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1. What is the Church of Christ? Dominus Iesus has the most definitive, comprehensive and clearest explanation.

Dominus Iesus 16:

- Christ and his Church are one and inseparable - “Just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single ‘whole Christ’. This same inseparability is also expressed in the NT by the analogy of the Church and the Bride of Christ (cf. Eph 5:25-29, Rev 21:2,9)”.
- Unicity of the Church of Christ (only 1 Church) – “The unicity of the Church founded by [Christ] must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: ‘a single Catholic and apostolic Church’” (LG 8).
- The Catholic Church is an historical continuation of the Church of Christ through the apostolic succession – “This is the single Church of Christ...which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care (cf. Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. Mt 28:18ff), erected for all ages as ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth’ (1 Tim 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church” (LG 8).
- Meaning of “subsist in” – “On the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that ‘outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth’ (LG 15, UR 3), that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church...’they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church’ (UR 3).

Dominus 17:

- Particular Churches lack full communion but remain united to the Catholic Church by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist. The Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches.

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- Other ecclesial communities – Through baptism, their faithful are “incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church (UR 3)”.
 - Warning – “The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection – divided, yet in some way one – of Churches and ecclesial communities”.
2. St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) on friendship with God as the perfection of the spiritual life:

“This is true perfection: not to avoid a wicked life because like slaves we servilely fear punishment, nor to do good because we hope for rewards, as if cashing in on the virtuous life by some business-like and contractual arrangement...we regard falling from God’s friendship as the only thing dreadful and we consider becoming God’s friend the only thing worthy of honor and desire. This, as I have said, is the perfection of life”. (CCSS p.274)