

Chinese Martyrs Catholic Church
Bible Sharing Program 2020-21
Session #7: Overview of Colossians, The Preeminence of
Christ as the First Born of All Creation

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

<p>A</p>	<p><u>Overview of Colossians</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epaphras, who served with Paul, first brought the Good News to the Colossian communities. The letter was written during his imprisonment with Paul and Timothy. The organization of the Colossian church and its location. The letter was likely to be written in Ephesus. • Threatened by the “empty and seductive philosophy”, Paul affirms the importance of the universality of Jesus Christ, “all things have been created through him and for him”, and emphasizes the spiritual life within the mystical body after baptism. • Along with John 1, Hebrews 1, Christ hymn in Philippians 2, these verses of Colossians constitute a key source of Christian theology, such as the mystery of the Holy Trinity and Christology. • Author: Paul and Timothy, penned by the latter. Some scholars have doubts about this hypothesis but there are reasonable explanations. • Fundamental Message: Christ has authority over all creation; the Church is united in Him; His salvation is the only thing we need. The organization and writing style of the letter. 	<p>CCSS 153-161</p> <p>1:7 CCSS 156, 159</p> <p>2:8 CCSS 153, 157-8 1:15-20</p> <p>CCSS 183</p> <p>CCSS 155, 1:1, 4:18</p> <p>CCSS 155 SN 1</p>
<p>B</p>	<p><u>Lesson Outline: Greeting, Petition, Christ’s Preeminence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting (1:1-2). Paul offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace of God at work among the Colossians (1:3-8), intercedes for the Colossians (1:9-14). The preeminence of Christ (1:15-20). Being reconciled with God through Christ, they must strive to be holy, without blemish, and persevere in faith. (1:21-23). 	<p>1:1-23</p>
<p>C</p>	<p><u>Greeting and Petition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” – Paul often self-identified as an apostle. Can he be called an apostle? • Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving in the Holy Trinity is (vv 3, 8) for the faith, hope, and love of the believers in Colossae. He reminds them “the hope reserved for you in heaven”. The Gospel they have 	<p>1:1-14</p> <p>1:1, 2019-20 BSP#1 SN2</p> <p>1:3-6, CCSS Gen 1:38, 2Cor 5:17, Gal 5:22-23, Rev 22:2</p>

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	<p>received “ just as in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together with Timothy and Epaphras, Paul called himself “a trustworthy minister of Christ”. • Paul prays that the Colossians “may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding”. He hopes that they may know and be able to apply God’s will in their daily life with wisdom, so that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit, “with all spiritual wisdom and understanding ... for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father”, just like the “shoot from the stump of Jesse”. If we live according to the Spirit, we will live “with joy” and “in every good work bearing good fruit”. They endure everything and “rejoice in the Lord”, giving thanks to God who “delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” => Leaving Egypt. 	<p>1:7 2019-20 BSP#9 B1</p> <p>1:9-14, CCSS</p> <p>Is 1:1-2</p> <p>Ph 4:4 2sam 7:12-13</p>
<p>D</p>	<p><u>Christ is the Firstborn and Fulfillment of All Creation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This cosmic Christ hymn is the heart and climax of the letter. This section puts the Colossians’ personal experience of salvation into the larger, cosmic story of the eternal son, the preeminence of Christ as the firstborn and heir to the entire universe. • “He is the image of the invisible God” – only the incarnate Son, an image of God, can be visible, just as the Spirit manifests God. This also prepares the way of understanding Christ as the new Adam, who restores the damaged image of the old Adam to the perfect image of God. • “... the firstborn of all creation” – He is the firstborn, not first-created. Paul uses the rich biblical notion of a firstborn son as preeminent in a family who will legally inherit the parents’ assets and properties. As the firstborn, the Son possesses everything that belongs to the Father; in Him “were created all things”; and sustained by Him. Secondly, He is chronologically the first to rise from the dead. Paul affirms the preeminence of Christ to persuade the Colossians not to follow the “philosophy” and those who worship “angels”. • “He is the head of the body, the church” – this verse portrays Christ and the church from the cosmic perspective; that is, the universality 	<p>1:15-23</p> <p>1:15-20 CCSS 172</p> <p>1:15a, CCSS, CSB</p> <p>1:15b-17, CCSS, CSB Pr 8:22-31, Deu 21:15-19</p> <p>2:8, 18</p>

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<p>of the church. As “the head of ... the church”, Christ’s relationship with His body, the church, is organic. “He is the beginning” – see group discussion.</p>	<p>Eph 5:23 2:19</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This verse also clearly connects the Temple and Jesus => Christ’s body is the new Temple, the dwelling place of God that is without blemish and perfect. 	<p>1:19, CCSS Ps 68:17, Jn 1:14 Lk 2:49</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “... through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross” – it is “all things” that need reconciliation, and “making peace” is the result of “the blood of his cross”. The fruit of reconciliation is “peace”. All these can only be accomplished through our mediator, Christ. 	<p>1:20, CCSS Is 11:1-9 SN2</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling those who “were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds” to repent, and to offer their lives to God, to become “holy, without blemish, and irreproachable”. Through the virtual of hope, “firmly grounded” on the gospel “which has been preached to every creature under heaven”. 	<p>1:21-23</p>

Special Notes:

1. The Chiastic Structure of Colossians:

- A *Grace from Paul* an apostle by the will of God (1:1-2)
- B *Thanking God* when praying for you to *walk in wisdom* (1:3-14)
- C *The gospel preached* to every creature under heaven (1:15-23)
- D *We are admonishing and teaching* every human in all wisdom (1:24-2:5)
- E *Walk and live in Christ*, with whom you have died and been raised (2:6-23)
- E’ You died and were raised with Christ *from living as you once walked* (3:1-7)
- D’ In all wisdom *teaching and admonishing* one another (3:8-16)
- C’ You have a *master in heaven* (3:17-4:1)
- B’ Pray for us in *thanksgiving and walk in wisdom* (4:2-6)
- A’ Full assurance in the will of God and *grace from Paul* (4:7-18)

2. St. Augustine on Jesus Mediating for His Body – the Church

We pray to him as God, he prays for us as a servant. In the first case he is the Creator, in the second a creature. Himself unchanged, he took to himself our created nature in order to change it, and made us one man with himself, head and body.

(Source: CCSS 180).