

Session Five

Reading Like the Apostles

Unless Someone Guides Me

Scripture, Tradition, and the Authority of the Church

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the New Testament authors read the Old Testament in a way no one would arrive at by private study of the Old Testament alone, and that this reading was handed to them rather than deduced by them.

Catholic Touchstone. Catholics do not read the Bible typologically because we need extra room for our doctrines. We read it that way because the apostles did, and because the risen Christ taught them to on the road.

This is the payoff session. For four weeks the group has been using a method without being told they were using it. Tonight it gets named, the sealed envelopes are opened, and the thread that has been running since Session 1 is finally spoken out loud.

What You Need to Know

On the day of the Resurrection two disciples walk to Emmaus, and Christ does not hand them a reading plan. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interprets to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Later, to the Eleven, he opens their minds to understand the Scriptures. Both scenes describe an act performed on them from outside. Understanding is given, not achieved.

Watch what the apostles do with that afterward. St. Paul says the rock in the wilderness was Christ, which the Book of Exodus does not say. He calls Adam a type of the one who was to come. St. Peter says baptism corresponds to the flood. The letter to the Hebrews calls the whole Law a shadow of the good things to come. St. Matthew takes a line from Hosea that plainly refers to Israel coming out of Egypt in the past tense, and applies it to a child returning from Egypt centuries later. None of these readings could be derived by a careful reader working alone with the Old Testament. Every one of them requires the key, and the key was handed over.

Naming it

The word is typology, from the Greek *typos*, meaning a pattern or a stamp. St. Paul uses the word himself of Adam.

The idea is that God writes history the way an author writes a novel, with earlier events genuinely happening in their own right while also being shaped to foreshadow what comes later. The Exodus really happened; it is also the pattern of the Passion. Isaac really was carried up a mountain by his father with the wood on his back.

The discipline, which matters more than the method

The obvious danger is that typology becomes a license to make any text mean anything, and you must not pretend that danger is imaginary. The Church supplies the rule, and it is worth knowing exactly. CCC 116 states that the literal sense is the foundation, and that all other senses of Scripture are based upon it. CCC 112 through 114 give three criteria for interpreting in the Spirit: attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, reading within the living Tradition of the Church, and attention to the analogy of faith, the coherence of the truths of faith with one another.

So a typological reading is disciplined when it rests on what the text actually says, coheres with the whole canon, and does not contradict the faith. And note what supplies that discipline. These criteria are handed to every reader and every reader is meant to use them. But they are not self-applying, and when readings collide someone must have the standing to settle the question. Giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God belongs to the living teaching office of the Church (CCC 85-87). Which is the point of the whole book.

One honest note for the leader. The Church has definitively fixed the meaning of remarkably few passages. The great majority of typological readings, including many beautiful ones, are permitted rather than required. Do not present a Father's reading as though the Church has settled it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” **Hosea 11:1**

Read the verse in its own context and it is not a prediction at all. It is God remembering the Exodus, in the past tense, and the son is Israel. Then Matthew 2:15 applies it to the child Jesus returning from Egypt, and says this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

If Matthew were doing what we usually mean by prophecy and fulfillment, this would be a misuse of the verse. He is doing something else: reading Christ as the true Israel, recapitulating his people's history in himself. That reading is either apostolic or arbitrary, and there is no third option.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

Questions on the Heptateuch (summary)

Augustine gives the principle in a single compact line that has shaped Western reading ever since: in the Old Testament the New lies hidden, and in the New the Old lies open.

Notice the symmetry. It is not that the Old Testament is a husk to be discarded once the kernel arrives. Each Testament is doing something to the other, permanently.

Widely attested formula given as summary with the work named; no section number printed.

Voice of the Church

St. Melito of Sardis

On Pascha (summary)

Melito, writing in the second century, preaches the Passover as pattern: the lamb, the blood on the doorpost, and the deliverance are read throughout as the shape of what Christ has done.

The value of Melito for your group is the date. This way of reading is not a medieval overgrowth on a simpler early faith. It is what Christian preaching looked like by the second century, within roughly a century and a half of the Resurrection.

Summary of the work's argument; no section number printed.

Voice of the Church

St. Gregory the Great

Moralia on Job, Letter to Leander (summary)

Gregory teaches, in substance, that Scripture grows with those who read it: the same text yields more as the reader is more capable of receiving it, and he compares Scripture to a river at once shallow and deep, in which a lamb may walk and an elephant may swim.

The lamb and the elephant are his image and it is worth repeating. But note what it implies and what it does not. It implies inexhaustible depth. It does not imply that every reader's depth is equally reliable, which is precisely why the Church supplies a rule.

Given as summary of his genuine teaching; the wading and drowning image is traditionally associated with him and is presented here as tradition rather than as a verified quotation.

Catechism Connection

- CCC 115-119 set out the senses of Scripture, literal and spiritual, with the spiritual divided into allegorical, moral, and anagogical.
- CCC 116 is the paragraph that keeps this honest: the literal sense is the foundation, and all other senses are based upon it.
- CCC 112-114 give the three criteria for reading in the Spirit: the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church, and the analogy of faith.
- CCC 128-130 treat typology directly and the unity of God's plan across the Testaments. Present the Church's approach from these paragraphs; do not claim the Catechism lays down a numbered rulebook for typology, because it does not.

Thread Watch

Leader only, and read this carefully before the session. Tonight three things resolve at once and the order matters.

- THREAD B first. Open the envelopes early in the Build, not at the end. The reveal is the setup for everything after it.
- THREAD A second. After the envelopes, the group should be able to name the premise themselves. Let them do it. Do not announce it.
- THREAD C last, in the Send. The Ethiopian's question turns around: they are becoming the guide for someone.
- If the envelopes disappoint, which happens, have a backup. Ask instead for a show of hands: how many wrote 2 Timothy 3:16? The point survives without the paper.

Session Goals

1. Every participant can define typology and give two New Testament examples from memory.
2. Every participant can state the discipline that keeps typology honest, beginning with the primacy of the literal sense.
3. The group discovers, from Hosea and Matthew, that the apostolic reading of the Old Testament cannot be derived from the Old Testament alone.
4. The group names, in their own words, the premise the study has been circling since Session 1.
5. Nobody leaves thinking typology is a trick for finding Catholic doctrines in odd places.

Timed Plan

- Opening prayer and Win: 10 minutes.
- The envelopes and question 3: 15 minutes.
- The Hosea discovery, questions 4 and 5: 25 minutes.
- Questions 6 and 7, the method and its discipline: 20 minutes.
- The steelman and question 8: 20 minutes.
- Send and closing: 12 minutes.

If you are running short: compress the steelman to a reading and a single response. Never cut the envelopes or the Hosea discovery.

THE OBJECTION BENCH

Leader only. Deploy what the room needs, skip the rest. Do not hand this page out. The matching Take-Home carries a shorter version in the participant's own words.

"Typology lets you find anything anywhere. It is unfalsifiable."

Take this seriously, because uncontrolled typology genuinely has produced nonsense, including among Catholics. Do not defend the excesses.

The reply is that the discipline exists and is public: the literal sense governs, the whole canon constrains, and the analogy of faith rules out readings that contradict the faith. And the deeper reply is that the objection lands on anyone who accepts the New Testament, because Matthew, Paul, Peter, and Hebrews all do it. The question is not whether to read typologically but under whose rule.

"Matthew is just misusing Hosea."

This is the honest version of the objection and it deserves a real answer rather than a dodge. Concede the observation: Hosea 11:1 in its own setting refers to Israel and is not predictive.

Then say what Matthew is claiming. He is claiming that Jesus is Israel reduced to one, living the nation's history over again and getting it right. Once you see that, the citation is not sloppy but dense. Whether you accept it depends on whether you accept the apostolic key, which is exactly the point of the session.

"The Fathers found Mary in every woman in the Old Testament."

Some readings are stronger than others and you should say so rather than defending all of them equally. The Ark parallels in Luke 1 are textually dense; some other patristic readings are devotional flourishes.

Point to CCC 116: the spiritual senses must rest on the literal sense, which is the foundation of all the others. That is the test of whether a reading is disciplined. Whether a reading binds is a different question, and it turns on whether the Church has actually proposed it, not on how beautiful or how ancient it is. Most patristic Marian typologies have never been proposed as binding, so a Catholic may find a given one unpersuasive without dissenting from anything the Church teaches.

"This is all just reading your conclusions back into the text."

Concede the risk plainly; everyone does this and Catholics are not exempt.

Then hand them the strongest evidence, which is not ours. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul says the rock was Christ. Exodus does not say that. Either an apostle had a key that the text alone does not supply, or he invented it. That choice is not one Catholics constructed.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, on the road to Emmaus you opened the Scriptures to two discouraged disciples and their hearts burned within them. Do that here. Open our minds tonight, because we cannot open them ourselves. Amen.

Win

1. Has anyone ever explained something to you that you had been looking straight at for years without seeing?
2. Bring out your envelope but do not open it yet. What do you remember writing?

Build

Open the envelopes. Have each person read aloud only the verse they wrote, not their reasoning. Write every answer where the group can see it.

3. What do you notice about the list?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Almost everyone will have written 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and the rest will have written a small handful of others.

Now ask the question the whole study has been building toward. Every person in this room accepts the same Bible. In Session 2 we read that verse together and reached a reading that millions of sincere Christians reject. So: the disagreement is not about whether Scripture is true. It is about who says what it means.

Do not answer this yourself. Ask it and wait. Someone in the room will name it.

4. For five weeks we have been assuming something without saying it. What has this study been doing to the Bible that we never named?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Reading it inside a community that hands over a key. Every session has done it: Nehemiah 8 behind Acts 8, Passover behind the handing on, the camp behind Matthew 18, Isaiah 22 behind Matthew 16.

The premise being tested all along was that the text alone, read privately, is self-sufficient and self-interpreting. The group has now watched the New Testament authors themselves fail to operate that way.

Let them say it. If they get most of the way there, finish the sentence with them rather than for them.

Live discovery. Give everyone Hosea 11:1 with the surrounding verses. Ask one question and let them work: who is the son, and is this a prediction? Only after they have answered, give them Matthew 2:15.

5. Who did Hosea mean? And what has Matthew done with it?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Hosea means Israel, and he is remembering the Exodus in the past tense. It is not a prediction and

nobody reading Hosea alone would take it as one.

Matthew applies it to the child Jesus and says it was fulfilled. He is not being careless. He is claiming that Jesus is Israel gathered into one person, living the nation's story again.

Ask directly: could you have gotten there from Hosea by yourself? Nobody will say yes. That is the finding.

6. Find two more. What do these say that their sources do not?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Have them look at 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (the rock was Christ), Romans 5:14 (Adam a type of the one to come), 1 Peter 3:20-21 (baptism corresponds to the flood), John 3:14 (the bronze serpent), and Hebrews 10:1 (the law a shadow of the good things to come).

In each case the Old Testament passage says nothing of the kind on its own. The apostolic writers are reading with something they were given.

7. If that is how Scripture is read, what stops a person from making it mean anything?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The rule, and it is public. The literal sense is the foundation and every other sense rests on it (CCC 116). The whole canon constrains. The analogy of faith rules out readings that contradict the faith. And the living Tradition of the Church applies all three.

Note what kind of thing that answer is. Every reader is meant to use those criteria; they are given to the whole Church, not withheld from the pew. What no private reader has is the standing to settle a disputed reading for everyone else. That belongs to the Church's teaching office (CCC 85-87).

DIG DEEPER: Where the method came from

Luke 24:27 says that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Christ interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Verse 45 says he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Both are things done to the disciples. The apostolic way of reading is not a discovery they made. It is a gift they received and then handed on, which is the subject of Session 2.

The Steelman

THE DEPTH Read in full.

The strongest form of the objection.

Grant that the apostles read this way. They were apostles. They wrote under inspiration and their readings became Scripture. That is precisely why nobody else may do it. An inspired author identifying the rock as Christ is revelation; a bishop in the fourth century identifying a Marian type in a minor prophet is invention wearing the same costume.

And look at what the method licenses in practice. Once any text can carry a hidden second meaning, no doctrine can ever be refuted from Scripture, because any passage that tells against you can be spiritualized and any passage that does not mention your doctrine can be made to. A method that cannot fail is not a method. It is a way of always being right.

8. What is right about that? And what does it cost the person making it?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

What is right: the objection is correct that undisciplined typology is unfalsifiable, and correct that some patristic and medieval readings are devotional rather than demonstrative. Concede both. A Catholic is free to find a given typological reading unpersuasive.

What it costs: the objection draws a line between inspired reading and later reading, and then has to explain who is authorized to police that line. Give the best answers their due first. A serious Protestant reader does not say each man for himself; he points to the canon itself, to grammatical-historical controls on the text, to historic confessions, and to real discipline inside an accountable church body. Those are genuine safeguards and you should say so. The Catholic question is what happens when those authorities divide, as they have, since each confession and each church body is finally received or rejected by the reader's own judgment, and none of them claims to be protected from error in settling the question. At that point the line is being policed by each individual reader after all, and the objection has reinvented the problem it accuses us of.

The Catholic answer is not that anyone may read typologically without restraint. It is that the same community that received the key also received the authority to say when it is being turned correctly, and that this authority is public, accountable, and has in fact rejected readings.

Land here, gently: we are not claiming the method is infallible in every hand. We are claiming it was handed on with a rule, and that the alternative on offer is not a method without risk but a method without a referee.

Send

9. You have been the Ethiopian in this study for five weeks. Who is currently reading something in the chariot next to you?
10. What is one place you still need a guide, and are you willing to go ask?

Live It This Week

- Read Luke 24:13-35 slowly and notice how much of it Christ does to them rather than for them.
- Pick one Old Testament story you know well and ask what it is a pattern of. Do not force it.
- At Sunday Mass, notice the relationship between the first reading and the Gospel. On Sundays and feasts the Old Testament reading is normally chosen to answer the Gospel, and often the link is typological. On weekdays the first reading usually runs its own continuous course, so do not force a connection that is not there.
- Say thank you to whoever has been your guide.

Closing Prayer

Father, you wrote one story across many centuries and many hands, and you gave your Church the key to read it. Keep us humble with that key. Let us never use it to win, and never bury it out of fear. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Memory Verse

“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” **Luke 24:45**

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

- Hosea 11:1, out of Egypt I called my son (live discovery)
- Matthew 2:15, the fulfillment citation
- Luke 24:13-35, the road to Emmaus
- Luke 24:27 and 44-45, he interpreted, and he opened their minds (memory verse at v. 45)
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, the rock was Christ
- Romans 5:14, Adam a type of the one to come
- 1 Peter 3:20-21, baptism corresponds to the flood
- John 3:14, the bronze serpent lifted up
- Hebrews 10:1, a shadow of the good things to come
- Galatians 4:24, Paul reading an episode as allegory
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, revisited from the envelopes

Catechism: CCC 112-114, 115-119 with 116 central, 128-130.

Patristic: St. Augustine, Questions on the Heptateuch (summary). St. Melito of Sardis, On Pascha (summary). St. Gregory the Great, Moralia on Job, Letter to Leander (summary).