



**Dr. Friesenhahn
Theology IV - Summer Reading Assignment**

Fr. Robert Barron, *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of the Faith*

Read the whole book but focus on Chapters 1, 3, 7, and 10. Answer each of the questions below.

Chapter 1

1. Why does Barron speak of the Incarnation in terms of “a jest,” “comedy,” “humor,” and a “joke”?
2. What does Barron identify as the “central claim of Christianity”?
3. Do you find this claim (whether you think it is true or false) “still startling after two thousand years”? Why might someone fail to find the claim startling?
4. Is Chesterton right that “even the most skeptical person is changed simply for having heard this message”? What does Chesterton mean, and do you agree?
5. What does Barron suggest is “the heart of sin”? Does this definition of sin make sense to you? Why/why not?
6. How does Barron attempt to clarify what Christianity “primarily” is? Why might this be a “most important” point to get right?
7. Why does Barron describe Jesus Christ as “unsettling” and “unnerving”?
8. In what sense is Jesus simply “a layman”? How can this observation help us to understand His life and mission better?
9. Specify one way in which Jesus speaks or acts “with an unprecedented authority.”
10. Look at the photo in the book of Caesarea-Philippi. Then read Matthew 16:13-18. What is the connection?
11. What question does Jesus pose to His disciples (Mark 8)? Why does Barron believe that this question “sets Jesus off from all of the other great religious founders”? How is Jesus different from Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius?
12. Identify “the bland middle position” that “is ruled out” by the famous “Lord-Liar-Lunatic” argument of C.S. Lewis in his classic book *Mere Christianity*.

13. Barron follows Lewis closely in presenting the Lord-Liar-Lunatic argument. Outline this argument carefully from its premise to its conclusion. Do you find this argument convincing? Why/why not?
14. Mark 10:32 may be an easy passage to overlook; so why does Barron consider it “very telling”? What point does Barron make regarding this passage that helps us see Jesus as more than “an ancient Deepak Chopra”?
15. What does Rudolf Otto mean by calling God “the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*”?
16. In the Old Testament, what “four great things” did the people of Israel expect YHWH to do? Briefly list the four things.
17. How does Jesus of Nazareth accomplish “these four tasks but in the most unexpected way”? Outline how Jesus fulfills each of these four tasks in an unexpected fashion.
18. How does the biblical scholar N.T. Wright suggest that the people in the villages surrounding the Sea of Galilee would have heard Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God?
19. Barron explains the term “devil” as coming from the Greek *ho diabolos*, which is from the verb *diabalein*, meaning ____.
20. “Among first-century Jews, the ____ was of paramount social and cultural importance.” Yet Jesus dramatically places “the instantiation of the Kingdom of God first.”
21. Jesus chooses “____ men” as “his intimate disciples” in order to present or embody “a kind of microcosm of the gathered Israel,” or “the new Israel,” or “the core of what would become the church.”
22. “The ____ was everything to a first-century Israelite. It was the center of his political, cultural, and religious life; even more, it was appreciated literally as the dwelling place of God on earth.”
23. Barron explains the term “adoration” as literally meaning *ad ora* or ____.
24. What does Barron mean by the spiritual principle: “we become what we worship”? Explain the general principle and then give a concrete example of it.

25. Ezekiel “prophesies that one day Yahweh himself will return to the Temple and cleanse it of its impurities, and on that day water will flow forth from the side of the Temple for the renewal of the earth.” How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

26. Barron emphasizes that *stratias*, in the context of “an entire *stratias* of angels,” means not merely “host” or assembly but “___.”

27. What was Cardinal Francis George of Chicago thinking while standing on the front loggia of St. Peter’s Basilica during the election of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005?

Chapter 3

1. When Moses asks God for His name, God responds with the expression ___ (Ex 3:14) and then gives the divine name ___ (Ex 3:15).

2. How does Barron interpret God’s answer to Moses?

3. Barron points out that “the mainstream of the Catholic theological tradition has tended not to refer to God as ___.”

4. Why does Thomas Aquinas prefer to call God *ipsum esse* or *qui est* instead of *ens summum*?

5. What does Thomas Aquinas mean by saying that for God, and only for God, *essentia est esse*?

6. Anselm of Canterbury describes God as “___.” What does Anselm mean by this expression?

7. “___, for example, was, in ancient mythology, the supreme deity, but clearly ___ plus the other gods, or ___ plus the world of nature, would be greater than ___ alone.” How does the Christian view of God differ from this view? In this context, what “very high paradox” regarding God does Barron present?

8. The term “mysterious” comes from the Greek *muein* meaning “___.”

9. The famous theologian Karl Rahner comments that “___” is the last sound we should make before ___.

10. What does it mean to say that God is both *transcendent* and *immanent*? Define both terms. Why do Christians use both terms to speak of God? Why not use just the one term or the other?

11. Outline the argument for God’s existence made by Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) regarding the “intelligibility” of the world and the divine *Logos*. Do you find this argument convincing? Why/why not?

12. The philosophy of ___ recognizes a god, or creator, or higher power, but denies that this god is provident or has any ongoing relationship with the world. The god of ___ winds the world up, so to speak, but then lets it go and steps away.

13. Use the concepts of *person* and *nature* to fill in the blanks: The orthodox understanding of the Trinity is that three fully divine ___ share one divine ___.

14. Use the concepts of *person* and *nature* to fill in the blanks: The orthodox understanding of Christ is that He is one ___ embracing two complete ___, one divine and one human.

Chapter 7

1. Explain Augustine’s distinction between *uti* and *frui*.

2. Why does Barron say that “the most useless activity of all is the celebration of the Liturgy, which is another way of saying that it is the most important thing we could possibly do”?

3. Why does Romano Guardini describe the liturgy as “a consummate form of play”?

4. Vatican II famously refers to the liturgy as “the ___ and ___ of the Christian life.”

5. Which aspect of the “gathering” that takes place in the liturgy is highlighted by the stories of Dorothy Day and Christopher Dawson told by Barron?

6. “By this gesture and this simple phrase [the sign of the cross] we announce that ___.”

7. “To speak of the cross is to reference the great act by which the Father sent the Son into ___ in order to gather us, through the Holy spirit, into ___.”

8. The sign of the cross reflects the fact that “we are praying ___ God and not merely ___ God.”

9. The Trinity is the very context of prayer. We pray to the ___, through the ___, in the ___ ___.

10. In what ways does the priest act *in persona Christi* during the liturgy? List the various ways.

11. How does Barron explain our use of the new translation “And with your spirit” during the mass?
12. Explain John of the Cross’ analogy between the soul and a pane of glass.
13. “Therefore as the Liturgy commences and we stand within the embrace of the ____, we mimic the saints and become, perforce, not less but more aware of our ____.”
14. Write out the full text (in English) of the *Kyrie*.
15. The *Kyrie* is an important part of the mass, because God “____ to forgive, but it is imperative that we realize that there is something in us that ____.”
16. How does the etymology of the term *worship* clarify the purpose of the *Gloria*?
17. Explain Aristotle’s concept, expressed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, of “a transcendent third.” Why is a transcendent third essential to a healthy friendship, marriage, or community? How does Barron’s Christian interpretation of this Aristotelian concept apply to the liturgy and the *Gloria*?
18. What is the purpose of the homily?
19. Barron argues that “the preacher, in surrendering to the ____ voice, actually finds his own most ____ voice.”
20. The creed said at mass (unless the Apostles Creed is used) is the creed that stems from the Council of ____ in ____ A.D.
21. Explain the refutation of the Arian heresy expressed in the term *homoousios*.
22. How is *homoousios* currently translated into English in the Nicene Creed? How was it previously translated? What clarification could be offered by the more literal translation?
23. How is the first line of the Nicene Creed “properly subversive”?
24. “A fundamental biblical principle is that in a world gone wrong there is no ____ without ____.”
25. “As we have seen in chapter three, the true God has no need of anything at all. The point is ____ need ____ in order to reorder us and thereby restore ____ with God.”
26. How is “the cosmos itself” present in the Eucharist?

27. Define Barron's key concept of "the 'loop' of grace."
28. Barron explains that "the Mass on ___ links us to the eternal ___ of ___."
29. Read John 6, the Bread of Life Discourse. What is the Catholic understanding of *transubstantiation* or the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist? Explain Barron's interpretation of John 6 and his argument in favor of the Eucharist as not merely symbolic but as Christ truly present.
30. Explain the difference between the Greek terms *phagein* and *trogein* in the context of John 6. Why does John choose the term that he does?
31. "If the terms "___" and "___" seem odd to us, we can translate them simply and accurately as "___" and "___."
32. Explain how J.L. Austin's theory of *performative speech* or *speech-acts* can help us to understand Jesus' words of "this is my body," and "this is the cup of my blood," or "Lazarus, come out!" and "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"
33. "Since Jesus's word is the divine Word [*Logos*], it is not merely ___ but ___." Explain this distinction.

Chapter 10

1. From Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud to John Lennon's *Imagine*, how have many agnostics and atheists critiqued Christian eschatology?
2. How could a Christian respond to the Marxist critique of Christian eschatology?
3. How does Dante see the punishments of those in the *Inferno*? Are they an expression of "arbitrary divine cruelty"?
4. Why does Barron regard ice as a better image for Hell than fire?
5. Explain Augustine's definition of sin as *incurvatus in se*.
6. "Part of the intense joy of heaven . . . is to know that one is ___ God and hence to stand ready for an infinitely fascinating journey ___ God."
7. Contrast Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* with Satan in Dante's *Inferno*. What can we learn from Dante's depiction of Satan?

8. How can the existence (or possibility) of Hell be compatible with “the infinity of divine love”?
9. “The existence of hell – at least as a possibility – is a corollary of two more fundamental convictions: that we are ____ and that God is ____.”
10. In what sense does Barron suggest that Heaven and Hell are the same “place”?
11. What is your opinion of Barron’s suggestion, following Hans Urs von Balthasar, that Hell is a real possibility but perhaps an “empty” state of being? Is it possible that no one is in Hell? Should Christians dare to hope that all are saved?
12. What are some of the common attacks against the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory? What is the response from Catholic apologetics?
13. What can we learn about Purgatory from Lough Derg?
14. In his “Excursus on Angels and Devils,” Barron notes that he wants to make a dig at the “scientism” popular in our culture. What is scientism? Why does Barron want to refute it?
15. “The word ‘angel’ is derived from the Greek *angelos*, which means ‘ ____.’”
16. What Gnostic or Manichaeian view of the Devil must be set aside? Why?
17. Barron focuses on three metaphors for Heaven: (a) the beatific vision, (b) the city, and (c) the new heavens and the new earth. Briefly explain each of these three metaphors.
18. What can the “rose window” of Notre Dame Cathedral teach us about Heaven?