

TRADITION, SCRIPTURE AND MAGISTERIUM

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Resource Speaker

I. Introduction

- By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge that is the order of divine revelation.
- Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He does this by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men.
- God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth, throughout the ages and be transmitted to all generations until Christ returns in glory.

II. Talk Proper

A. On Tradition

In the Apostolic Preaching

- In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on two ways:
 1. Orally -by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received ...from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works or from the promptings of the Holy Spirit
 2. In Writing -by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy spirit, committed of salvation to writing.

- From the apostles namely Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thaddeus, Bartholomew, Thomas, James the Less, Matthew, Simon the Zealot, Judas Iscariot replaced by St. Matthias.

...continued in apostolic succession

- The Apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.
- Through tradition, the Church in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes.
- The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and prayer.

- The Fathers of the Church are so called because of their leadership in the early Church especially in defending, expounding and developing Catholic doctrines. For the first centuries, most of them were bishops...later on there were certain priests and deacons who were recognized as Church fathers. They are well known for the orthodoxy of doctrine, personal sanctity and approval of the Church like Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus, Cyprian, Athanasius, Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, Pope Leo the Great, Pope Gregory the Great and many more...
- Sacred Tradition is the only source of information about fundamentally important ideas like the Holy Trinity or Marian Doctrine which isn't explicit in the Bible.

B. On Scripture

- Sacred Scripture also called the Bible, a collection of books, is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit. God is the author of Sacred Scripture.
- For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.
- God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers.
- It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes **46 books** for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentation as one) and **27 books** for the New Testament.
- The four Gospels namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John occupy a central place because Christ Jesus is their center .
- The unity of the two Testaments proceeds from the unity of God's plan and his revelation. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfils the Old; the two shed light on each other; both are true Word of God.
- The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord.

C. Relationship Between Tradition and Sacred Scripture

- As one common source, Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound so closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always to the close of the age."
- Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.
- Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching.

- Through Scripture and Tradition, God has revealed to the human race what we need to know for the sake of salvation.

D. Magisterium

- The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

- The Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but as its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully.

- Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me," the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.

- It is defined as "the Church's divinely appointed authority to teach the truths of religion". In other words, Our Lord gave His Church the authority to teach the faithful about what is expected of them, and that is what the Church has done consistently from the start.

The Magisterium of Catholic Church teaches the faithful in **two** ways;

1) **Solemn Magisterium:** is Church teaching which is used only rarely by formal and authentic definitions of councils or Popes. This includes dogmatic definitions by councils or Popes teaching "ex cathedra"

2) **Ordinary Magisterium:** this second form of Church teaching is continually exercised by the Church especially in her universal practices connected with faith and morals, in the unanimous consent of the Fathers and theologians, in the decisions of the Roman Congregations concerning faith and morals, in the common sense of the Faithful, and various historical documents, in which the faith is declared.

Examples of the Solemn Magisterium of the Church (also called "ex cathedra teaching"):

- The decisions made during the General Councils of the Catholic Church.
- Papal encyclicals on "The Immaculate Conception" (1849) and "Defining the Dogma of the Assumption" (1950)

Examples of the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church:

- Universal teaching of the Church such as other papal encyclicals (when not written in "ex cathedra" form), universal references such as the Summa Theologica, and writings of Saints that are continually utilized by the Church and passed from Pope to Pope without objection.

III. Conclusion

- The source of all revelation is the Word – Jesus Christ who became flesh and dwelt among us. That Word reveals God to God’s people through creation, Scripture and tradition. We may question, Why is an understanding of Scripture and Tradition so important?

- The authors of Dei Verbum tells us why as they begin their document: “This synod that is the Second Vatican Council, wants the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through hearing it may believe, through belief it may hope, through hope it may come love”

- May we allow the Word of God to dwell in our hearts so that we too may grow to believe, to hope and to love. For the Word of God and tradition live on for the salvation of souls. May we all be saved!