

Chapter 3 - Proclaim the Gospel to every creature
(How is Divine Revelation handed onto us?)

Last week, Tara did a beautiful job of talking about how we can know God; and how through reason, we can see proof of the existence of God.

This week we are going to talk about Divine Revelation; how God reveals Himself to us.

Red Bibles ~

~ 1 Timothy Chapter 4 Verse 6-16. (p.1309?) This is a letter written by St. Paul to a leader of the early Church, probably in Ephesus. St. Paul, as Bishop, had ordained Timothy who was fairly young.

“...give these instructions to the brothers..... This saying is trustworthy..... you save yourself and those who listen to you...”

~ Now to end of Timothy, Chap 6 verse 20 “O, Timothy guard what has been entrusted to you....”

It’s not only what has been entrusted to the early Church, but it is for us – just as personally as it was to the early Church. Divine Revelation is not just words that drift out into the empty air. It is words spoken personally to *you*; wherever you are. It is intended for your soul right now – God’s Word personally spoken to you!

The way God reveals Himself is meant to be personal, beautifully personal.

God has spoken into history. But how?

4 ways – (Scripture is last, and it is important to have them in the right order)

Creation

- 1.) The first way, Tara talked about some last week. God reveals Himself through what He makes – through creation.

~ Romans Chapter 1 Verse 18-21 (p.1210-1211?)

“...wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven....For what can be knownis evident to them because God made it evident to them.” What God is like can be known in what He has made. “For though they knew God, they did not afford Him praise”

The people of the time live very close to nature, to the elements; They should be able to know God and what He is like – His Goodness; that He should be thanked, that He should be worshipped.

Nature also powerfully communicates the power of God and His judgment. This made the people very aware of their dependence on God.

Conscience

2.) What is Conscience? This is from the CCC:

1776: "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment. . . . For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. . . . His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."

When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.

This is the definition of Conscience from the Catechism:

1778: Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law:

*"Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; I mean that it was not a dictate, nor conveyed the notion of responsibility, of duty, of a threat and a promise. . . . [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ."*⁵⁰ John Henry Cardinal Newman

There are some things you don't need God to write down to know what is right. The demands of the law are written in your heart – whether you've heard the law or not. The Commandments is what God wanted to highlight. He wrote them in stone, not on paper. Of course sin clouds all this and we'll talk more about that later, but for example the 5th Commandment is "Thou shall not kill". You don't need anyone to tell you that it is wrong to kill someone standing in front of you.

But it is important to realize that your conscience needs to be formed rightly. There are so many ways it can be formed wrong- parents can teach wrong, schools, TV, politically.... etc. The formation of conscience is a lifelong task. CCC 1790 covers errors in judgement.

We need to be "consecrated in the truth". John 17:11-22

11 And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are.

12When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled.g

13But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely.h

14I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.i

*15*I do not ask that you take them out of the worldj but that you keep them from the evil one.*

16They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

17Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.k

18As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.l

19And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

20“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

21so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.m22And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,23

Sacred Tradition

3.) Hebrews Chapter 1 Verse 1-2 (p. 1324?) (NT towards the back)

~ “In times past, God spoke in *partial* and in *various* ways..... these last days...”

As anyone who has had a long distance relationship knows, figuring out how to be present to your love can be tough. Writing love letters is good, but after awhile, letters are not enough. The lover will have to travel to be with the beloved. For a time God sent us love letters, then He sent prophets to tell us what He wanted us to know, but it wasn't enough. He came to us. The Gospel reading – maybe the most famous Scripture verse of all - John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son.”

This is Tradition with a capital T.

The Church also has tradition with a lower case “t”. The lower case “t” tradition are the things that can and do change. Things like the color of the priest's vestments, or receiving Communion in the hand, or certain aspects of the way Mass is celebrated.

Capital “T” Tradition are the things that God wanted to tell us that will never change.

This is not tradition in the sense of “well, that's the way we've always done it.” It is God speaking. It is meant as much for us, each one of us personally, today, as when it was first spoken. It is living and active. God comes to meet us where we are.

Tradition is the living word of the Church.

It is important to know, that the Bible is not enough without the Tradition that surrounds it. It is important to see the value of both together.

In keeping with God's command the Gospel is handed on in 2 ways – orally and in writing:

~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 – whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.” (Sacred Tradition)

Apostolic Succession – Jesus handed it to the Apostles, who appointed bishops as their successors. This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture.

~In writing, “by the apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing.” (Sacred Scripture)

Sacred Tradition, along with Sacred Scripture, together are 2 components of what is known as the Deposit of Faith.

The Deposit of Faith is what God has given us; what He has revealed to us; it is complete. It is something given and is done.

In His Son Jesus, God has said all He was going to say. Revelation is closed in Jesus Christ. All that must be believed for salvation, has already been revealed. Even with the modern problems of today, what has already been revealed will shed light on the truth. As the great Doctor of the Church, St. John of the Cross, says, paraphrasing: “God our Father spoke but one word in the eternal silences of the Trinity, his eternal Word: Jesus. He has no more to say.”

(The handout – the Deposit of Faith has what Tradition contains).

Sacred Scripture – the written part of Tradition

4.) The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament. None of what we know as the New Testament was even written during Jesus' life time. The earliest of the writings wasn't written until about 20 years after His death. During the first century, God led those in the early Church to begin writing things down, and it took awhile past the first century for it to be completed. God guided those authors to use their talents and gifts through Divine Inspiration.

Christianity is the religion of the Word of God, which is incarnate and living. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of the living God, and through the Holy Spirit opens our minds to understand the Scriptures. In order to understand Scripture, the reader must take into account the conditions of the time and culture of the human authors.

There are 27 books in the New Testament, but there were additional writings considered for inclusion. It took 300 years of consideration and discernment before the Church declared that these writings were Divinely Inspired and were to form the New Testament.

The Bible is 73 Books:

46 in the Old Testament

27 in the New Testament

Which is also known as the Canon of Scripture. (we heard the term last week)

The Old Testament declared, in prophecy, the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men. (The road to Emmaus...)

The New Testament – 4 Gospels – the heart of Scripture – they are the principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, Jesus.

The New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition. The Gospels were formed in three stages – 1. The life and teaching of Jesus. 2. The oral tradition handed on by the apostles' preaching with a fuller understanding after His ascension. 3. And The written Gospels.

Christians read the Old Testament in light of Christ crucified and risen. The New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old. "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."

All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ.

Scripture is the last form of Revelation –

All the other forms existed before it

The Church made the Bible, not the other way around

St. Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books and he never even met Jesus in person.

Who decided what should be in the Bible? Who had the God-given authority to decide? That's where Tradition - the reality that the Church preserves God's Revelation to His people. The Church carries on. Tradition precedes Scripture and is its author.

Chronologically Scripture is last. The Church was already functioning, and functioning well, for 300 years before Sacred Scripture was settled.

The Apostles entrusted the entire Deposit of Faith to the whole of the Church. The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. The teaching office is known as the Magisterium of the Church. 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 Pope.

The Magisterium is servant to the Word of God, not superior to it.

The Church's Deposit of Faith has three main components; Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium.

Our response to God's Revelation is Faith, where we surrender our whole selves to Him – which bring us to Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 – Bring about the Obedience of Faith (Now that we've heard how do we react?)

Faith is a gift of God, but it requires our cooperation. God is a gentleman. (Not that He is a man or necessarily gentle.) He will never force Himself (His love and truth) on us. This allows us to respond freely. God does not want us to be His slaves. Love is only love if it is given freely. It cannot be forced. (dandelions?) Faith is a relationship with God, the most personal relationship we will ever have.

Qualities of Faith

Express our belief in God and then we apply it to our daily lives.
Acts 16:31 "Believe in the Lord Jesus"

- Faith is a personal and communal relationship
Our personal faith brings us into a relationship with God's people, and the faith of the entire people strengthens is in our relationship with God. We are the Church. That is the greater relationship. (grains of flour are separate, but together make a loaf of bread)
- Faith seeks understanding and is a friend of reason
Faith and reason work together to discover truth
- Faith is necessary for salvation
Mk 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned."
- Faith is a gift of grace
God not only speaks to us, He gives us the grace to respond.
- Faith is a free, human act
Faith is a way of knowing, just as reason is, but living in faith is not possible unless there is action on our part. God will never force Himself on us. At Capernaum, Jesus asked the Apostles, "Do you also want to leave?" Peter answers

“Master, to whom shall we go?” Jn 6:67-68 This was Peter’s free, loving declaration of his commitment to Jesus.

- Faith believes with conviction in a message
“Our Gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and [with] much conviction.” (1Thes 1:5)
“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1)

CCC 153. Characteristics of Faith

Faith is a grace

Faith is a human act

Faith and understanding

The freedom of faith

The necessity of faith

Perseverance in faith

The beginning of eternal life

Faith is a journey. Like any relationship, our faith develops in stages. There will be times of temptation, worry, shadows, and darkness. The saints experienced the same. This is normal and all part of the journey. The Holy Spirit sees us through.

The ultimate goal of faith is eternal union with God in heaven. Last week Stacie mentioned the first question in the old Baltimore Catechism “Why did God make me?” {To know Him, to love Him and serve Him in this world to be happy with Him forever in the next. When you get to know someone you fall in love with them; serve them. We are going to fall in love with Jesus this year. Then we will all be together in heaven.}

Our faith is spelled out in two creeds – the Apostles Creed, and the Nicene Creed (from the first 2 Ecumenical Councils - Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381.)

The Apostles Creed was handed out tonight. The Nicene Creed is said at Sunday Mass after the Homily. We hear God’s Word through Scripture, then through the inspired words of the priest, then WE profess what we believe.

(Remember, last week Stacie told us that Catechism means to “echo down”. There has been a requirement to teach the Faith, to hand on what we have been given, from the very beginning.)