

Revelation From and Through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture One Common Source

By William A. Schmitt, March 2022

Tonight's topic is How God reveals Himself to us in Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture.

God loves us very much and wants to help and save us in any and every way possible. God wants you to know Him and love Him. He wants you to know He is with you always. He wants to be with you personally. All through the Old Testament we find Him present among us through the Holy Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, and the prophets. God consistently loves us no matter what we feel towards Him or think about Him. God's presence is among us today through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, ***right here in this room, right now!*** He longs for you and your love. He longs for intimacy and to become personally involved. He wants you to know this and how He feels about you. He gives us Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture for us to discover the joy and satisfaction of a personal relationship with Him. Through Tradition and Scripture, God reveals to us His love, His kindness, His justice, and His mercy.

I would like to clarify the word tradition. I don't want to lose you because of a misleading definition. Father Blake Briton in his book titled "Reclaiming Vatican II" says that "Today 'tradition' generally has a negative meaning. The label tradition implies close-mindedness, rigidity, and staleness and it is often seen as the enemy of progress. It is the complete opposite. The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin verb '*Tradere*', meaning 'to hand on' or 'to hand over.' It was originally used in the Roman Empire to denote a legal transaction such as handing over a piece of property. Culturally, the term represents the handing over of one generation's wisdom to another¹." It is

the handing over, the passing on of the true richness of our Catholic Faith. Tradition therefore is active, not stagnant.

It is something that is happening, not something that has passed. Gustav Mahler defines tradition as “the preservation of fire, not the worship of ashes.”¹

I hope you can see that tradition is a vibrant living thing not something stuffy and worthless from the past. New Generations stand on the shoulders of their ancestors to attempt progress and not stumble about in the darkness of ignorance.

The foundation for our Catholic Faith stands on three legs:

1. Sacred Tradition,
2. Sacred Scripture, and
3. The Magisterium (the teaching office of the Church).

As with any three-legged stool, cut off any one leg and the stool collapses. The Magisterium, the living teaching office of the Church, is the authority inspired by the Holy Spirit for determining what comprises Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. It is the teaching authority Jesus gave to His Church (The Apostles, their bishops and their successors, and us). We are an Apostolic church. *Our Church was founded on the Apostles chosen by Jesus Christ.* The Magisterium preserved and defended the Word of God down through the centuries to the church today. The Magisterium defines the dogmas of Christian belief.

The “Church” is you and me. We are the Church. Our Pope, our bishops, pastors, priests, the laity, you, and I are “The Church.”

Dei Verbum paragraph 8 tells us that **Sacred Tradition** is the word of God handed down from generation to generation through the centuries from Jesus Christ to the Apostles, to their bishops, to the church (i.e. ‘us’), and so

on. The Apostles learned through living with Jesus, by oral preaching, by his example, and by observances or rituals and passed on to us today. (Dei Verbum ¶8).

{As a side note Dei Verbum was one of the four dogmatic constitutions of the Second Vatican Council held from 1962 to 1965. Dei Verbum is Latin for the "Word of God." You can read all the documents of Vatican II online, and I encourage you to read and understand them. They are not difficult to read and understand. You will find them enlightening. For instance, did you know Vatican II did **not** do away with Friday abstinence from meat? You can also find the entire Bible and Catechism online. I provided links in the handout.}

Sacred Tradition is the word of God that has been passed down to us from the Apostles who traveled and spent time with Jesus, pretty much 24/7. They trained under Jesus. They walked and lived with Jesus and were right there next to him when he taught, when he healed, when he prayed. They learned from Jesus' own lips and by observing His actions. The Apostles handed on to their Bishops and the Church that which Jesus showed and taught them.

Sacred Tradition is also proclaimed through Popes calling Ecumenical Councils down through the centuries, and with their Bishops, inspired by the Holy Spirit, interpret issues of faith and these truths are passed on, handed down to each new generation. Church councils rediscover with fresh eyes Sacred Tradition and Scripture through the Holy Spirit's inspiration and guidance.

A few Examples of Sacred Traditions are:

- Peter is the Head of the Church.
- Mary retained her virginity before, during and after the birth of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Mary was born without Original Sin.

- Mary was assumed into heaven body and soul.
- Terms such as “Trinity” are not in Scripture but come from Sacred Tradition.

Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture is the library of 73 books known as the Bible - 46 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. The Old and New Testament books and letters are the written word inspired by the Holy Spirit. The 73 books were determined by the Magisterium through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament, while being the primary source for all that God revealed in Christ, is itself a product of Sacred Tradition². The Bible was canonicalized or standardized by the Council of Rome in 382, the Council of Carthage in 397 and the Council of Trent in 1543.

The early church used four criteria to determine the canonicity of a New Testament book.

1. Each book was written by an apostle, or one closely associated with an apostle.
2. Universal acceptance - These books were acknowledged by all major Christian communities by the 4th century.
3. Liturgical Use. Books used in the liturgies of the churches.
4. The books that were considered inspired because they were consistent and bore the marks of inspiration.

Dei Verbum 9 from Vatican II tells us that **Tradition and Scripture** have a close connection. For they both flow from the same divine wellspring. They merge into a unity and move toward the same end. Both Tradition and Scripture come from the same one source, God. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture, and the Holy Spirit inspires our Pope and Bishops at Ecumenical Councils. Both Tradition and Scripture lead us to know God, to love Him and Serve, and Worship Him.

St. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians exhorts us to "...stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by *word of mouth* or by *letter*." (2Thess, 2:15)

It is all so amazing, wonderful, and awesome that God desires us so much. He cares for us, does favors for us, and saves us. He longs to be with us, and we ignore Him, run from Him; insult and shame Him in our worship of the four false gods of wealth, pleasure, honor, and power³. Father John Jay Hughes in his publication on mortal sin says: "All of us have worshipped at the shrine of some false god at one time or another, some of us for years. We may not know it, but we are actually seeking God and happiness chasing those idols. So much of our lives are wasted pursuing these false gods not knowing that the deepest desires of the heart can be satisfied by God alone⁴." God loves us and goes to extraordinary lengths pursuing us, to be with us, longing for us. We respond by letting God move closer to our heart the more we get to know Him. And We get to know Him through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Pray for His grace to know in your heart His enormously extravagant love for you.

Notes

¹Fr. Blake Britton, *Reclaiming Vatican II*, (Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 2021), 23.

²Ken Graham, "What are some examples of Sacred Tradition in the Catholic Church?" (2021)

<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/80580/what-are-some-examples-of-sacred-tradition-in-the-catholic-church#:~:text=John%202021%3A%2023-25%20The%20New%20Testament%2C%20while%20being,of%20God%20and%20the%20events%20of%20salvation%20history.>

³St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, 1273.

⁴Rev. John Jay Hughes, *Crises Magazine*, March 2007.

<https://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/45268#:~:text=St.%20Thomas%20>

[Aquinas%2C%20one%20of%20our%20greatest%20theologians%2C%20dead%20of%20a%20heart%20attack%20in%20his%2050s](#), 2012.

References for Revelation from and Through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Tradition)

⁴*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; ⁵and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; ⁷and you shall *teach* them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates"*

Matthew 28:20 (Holy Spirit)

²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Acts 2:42-47 (Tradition, Scripture)

⁴²And they held steadfastly to the Apostle's *teaching* and *fellowship*, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. ⁴³And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

2Peter 1:20-21 (Magisterium, Scripture)

“²⁰First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

1Cor 11:2 (Tradition)

“¹²I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.”

2Thes 2:15 (Tradition)

“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.”

2Thes 3:6 (Tradition)

“⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.”

2Tim 2:2 (Tradition)

“²And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

CCC 80 (Tradition, Scripture)

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them flowing out from the same divine wellspring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal.” (Dei Verbum 9). 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” (Mt 28:20)

CCC 81 (Scripture)

“*Sacred Scripture* is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit” (Dei Verbum 9).

“And Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the Apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the Apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may

faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching” (Dei Verbum 9).

CC 82 (Tradition and Scripture are One Source)

As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (Dei Verbum 9).

CCC 83 (Tradition)

The *Tradition* is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times in which the great Tradition is expressed. In light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified, or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church’s Magisterium.

CCC 88 (Magisterium)

The Church’s Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an *irrevocable* adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation, or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.

CCC 95 (Tradition, Scripture, Magisterium)

“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.” (Dei Verbum 10 §3)

CCC Summary (IN BRIEF)

CCC 96 – What Christ entrusted to the Apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

CCC 97 – “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” (DV 10), in which as in a mirror, the pilgrim church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

CCC 98 – “The Church in her doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes” (Dei Verbum 8 §1).

[Documents of the Second Vatican Council](#) -

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm

[Catechism of the Catholic Church \(usccb.org\)](#) -

<https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/136/>

<https://mycatholic.life/bible/>

Ken Graham, “What are some examples of Sacred Tradition in the Catholic Church?” (2021)

[https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/80580/what-are-some-examples-of-sacred-tradition-in-the-catholic-church#:~:text=John%202021%3A%2023-](https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/80580/what-are-some-examples-of-sacred-tradition-in-the-catholic-church#:~:text=John%202021%3A%2023-25%20The%20New%20Testament%2C%20while%20being,of%20God%20and%20the%20events%20of%20salvation%20history.)

[25%20The%20New%20Testament%2C%20while%20being,of%20God%20and%20the%20events%20of%20salvation%20history.](https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/80580/what-are-some-examples-of-sacred-tradition-in-the-catholic-church#:~:text=John%202021%3A%2023-25%20The%20New%20Testament%2C%20while%20being,of%20God%20and%20the%20events%20of%20salvation%20history.)

Rev. John Jay Hughes, Crises Magazine, March 2007.

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[Meat on Fridays – Our Catholic Faith](#) – <https://ourcatholicfaith.org/meat-on-fridays/>