

RCIA session 5, October 12th, 2010

SACRED TRADITION AND FAITH

So Far...

- ⦿ We have a “built-in” desire for God
- ⦿ We can know some things about God using human reason, but we are ultimately limited
- ⦿ God bridges the gap by revealing Himself to us
- ⦿ God’s self communication occurred in stages, but reached its culmination in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, God become man.

The Deposit of the Faith

- ⦿ Everything Jesus did and taught and handed on to His Apostles
 1. “He who hears you, hears me and he who rejects you rejects me” (Lk 10:16).
 2. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21).
 3. Christ also promised them the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth (John 16:13).
- ⦿ The totality of truth intended to be handed on for the sake of our salvation

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

- ⦿ God the Father → Jesus the Word → The Apostles (The deposit of the Faith) →
 1. Oral (Tradition)
 2. Writing (Scripture)
- ⦿ → The Church (Apostolic Succession)

Sacred Tradition

- Distinctively Catholic
- Root of the difference between Catholics and other Christians: source of authority

What happens when the Apostles die?

- “What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim 2:2)

- ① “It is possible, then, for everyone in every Church, who may wish to know the truth, to contemplate the tradition of the Apostles which has been made known throughout the whole world. And we are in a position to enumerate those who were instituted Bishops by the Apostles, and their successors to our own times...For surely they wished all those and their successors to be perfect and without reproach, to whom they handed on their authority.”

Apostolic Succession

- ◎ ...Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and to impart to them heavenly gifts....But in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors, "handing over" to them "the authority to teach in their own place...."
(DV 7)

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

- ◎ This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing (DV 7).

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

- For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity.... **Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.** Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence (DV 9).

St. Paul and 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” (2 Thes 2:15).

The Bible Alone?

- Unbiblical
- Unhistorical
- Impractical

Faith

- Faith as “both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God (who invites his or her response) and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed.”

Faith

- ⦿ A gift of God
- ⦿ A human act
- ⦿ Personal adherence to God
- ⦿ Belief in revealed truth
- ⦿ Faith is Certain
- ⦿ Personal, but communal
- ⦿ Not opposed to reason or science

Increasing in Faith

- ⦿ Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of Faith in prayer
- ⦿ Participate devoutly and frequently in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession
- ⦿ Read spiritual works, especially the scriptures, the catechism, and the lives of the Saints
- ⦿ Seek companionship of other believers
- ⦿ Exercise faith by professing it, defending it, and doing good works

For Discussion

- ① Why might it make sense for Jesus to commission followers to carry of his saving vision? How do leaders of the Catholic Church continue the vision of Jesus in our times?
- ① In what ways do you find it difficult to be open about your faith in public situations? How have you been able to apply your faith to family issues, community development, and political decisions?
- ① What steps might you take to make your faith more effective in our culture? What help in this regard do you expect from the Church?
- ① Who are outstanding models of faith that inspire you to deeper faith and practice? How is your faith bringing you closer to God and to a deeper understanding of his message?