

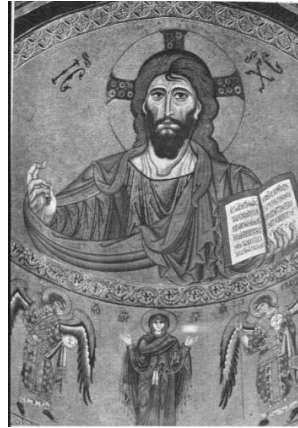
Divine Revelation and Sacred Scripture

Opening Discussion:

- How many gospels are there?
- In your religious tradition and upbringing, what is Sacred Scripture / The Bible?
- What is Divine Revelation? Can Divine Revelation be universal? private? Both?
- Are Sacred Scripture and Divine Revelation synonymous?

How Catholics Understand Revelation and Scripture

- Divine Revelation
- Transmission of Divine Revelation in Scripture and in Sacred Tradition
- Sacred Scripture



Divine Revelation

- The Catholic *concept* of **revelation** lies at the heart of the Christian Faith
 - We believe that God has uniquely **revealed** Himself **to humanity** in the arena of human history.
 - Christians do not believe that we seek God and then find Him (as, for example, in Buddhism).
 - We believe that God chose to reveal Himself to us. **Christianity is a response to God's self-disclosure in history.**

Divine Revelation – content

- The *content* of **revelation** is
 - the self-revelation of God (CCC §101)
 -not data or facts
 - St. Bonaventure – the revelation of God is the outpouring of the “fountain fullness” of God’s self and of the Divine love for us (*The Soul’s Journey to God*)

Divine Revelation –why?

- The *motivation* of **revelation** is
 - “God wills that all be saved” - (1 Tim 2:4)
 - Why – it is the nature of God, *Deus Caritas Est*. “God is love.” (1 John 4:8)
 - To what end? We are destined to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4)

The Stages of Revelation

- **God forms a People**
 - The call of Abraham & Sarah, Moses, David, etc.
 - The prophets
- **...in their lives' events**
 - Exodus to the Promised Land
 - The Age of the Kings
 - The Babylonian Exile and Return
- Revealing something about **God's self**



The Stages of Revelation

- **Yet... the Fullness of Revelation**
 - The person of **Jesus Christ**, revealed in the New Testament
- "In the beginning was the Word..." (John 1:1)
 - "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." (Hebrews 1:1-2)



The Stages of Revelation

- **There will be no further public Revelation**
 - **No new public revelation** is to be expected before Jesus returns (*Die Verbum 4*)
 - Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has **not been made completely explicit**; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.
- **There is “private” revelations**
 - Not part of the deposit of faith.
 - It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history.

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

- **The Handing on of Divine Revelation**
 - Jesus commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel (Matt 24:16-20)
 - In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all.
- The Apostles chose to hand on the Gospel in **two ways**:
 - orally
 - in writing



The Oral *traditio* . . .

Continued in apostolic succession

“In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority” (CCC 71)



Handing on the Faith



Jesus



Living Tradition

Handing On the Faith

- **People** tasked with **handing on** the Faith
 - For this I (Paul) was appointed preacher and apostle (1 Tim 2:7)...I entrust this charge to you, Timothy (1 Tim 1:18)
 - ... which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate. (1 Tim 4:14)
- **Handing on the oral tradition**
 - Take as your norm the sound **words that you heard** from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 1:13)
 - And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well. (2 Tim 2:2)

Handing On the Faith

- **Handing on the Sacred Texts**
 - But you, remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it, and that from infancy you have known (the) sacred scriptures [Old Testament], which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All scripture is inspired by God** and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:14-17)
 - *theopneustos* (Greek, "God breathed")
 - *divinitus inspirata* (Latin, "inspired by God")

Divine Author of Scripture

“These divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit... **they have God as their author...**”

Dei Verbum, 11

Human Author of Scripture

- “...In composing the sacred books God chose men and **while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities**, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.”

Dei Verbum, 11

The Purpose of Scripture

“Therefore...the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings **for the sake of our salvation**”

Dei Verbum, 11

Scripture and Tradition

- The task of **interpreting** the Word of God authentically
 - has been entrusted solely to the **Magisterium** of the Church,
 - i.e., to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.
- This **living transmission**, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called **Sacred Tradition**
- "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a **single sacred deposit of the Word of God**" (*Dei Verbum* 10)

Written Tradition: Scripture

- 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 §96)

NT Formation and Transmission

- The Historical Jesus
words are spoken and deeds are performed by Jesus himself during his lifetime on earth.
- Oral Tradition
based upon the words and deeds of Jesus, traditions and beliefs about Jesus are developed and passed on by early Christian communities.
- Written Sources
some of the miracles and/or sayings of Jesus are compiled and recorded in early written documents.
- Written Texts
individual letters, full Gospels, etc., are written with particular messages for particular situations.

NT Formation and Transmission

- **Distribution**
some writings are copied and shared with other Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean.
- **Collection**
certain Christians begin collecting the letters of Paul and gathering together several different Gospels.
- **Canonization**
four Gospels, several collections of letters, and a few other texts are accepted as authoritative scriptures.

NT Formation and Transmission

- **Translation**
biblical texts are translated into ever more ancient and modern languages: Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, etc.
- **Interpretation**
the meaning of the scriptures is investigated on various levels: literal, spiritual, historical, social, etc.
- **Application**
communities and individuals use the NT for practical purposes: liturgical, moral, sacramental, theological, etc.

Sacred Scripture: Inspiration

- “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” (DV 11)
 - God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors;
 - he acts in them and by means of them in full use of their own faculties and powers
 - He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth

Sacred Scripture: Interpretation

- To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to **affirm**, and to what God wanted to **reveal** to us by their words
 - Content and unity of the whole of Scripture
 - Understand within the living tradition of the whole Church
 - Be attentive to the analogy of faith, that is, the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

Sacred Scripture: Inerrancy

- "Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teaches that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see considered to the Sacred Scriptures." (DV 11; CCC §107)

The Canon of Scripture

- **Four Criteria for Canonicity**
 - Apostolic Origin - attributed to and/or based on the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their closest companions)
 - Universal Acceptance - acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the Mediterranean world (by the end of the fourth century)
 - Liturgical Use - read publicly along with the OT when early Christians gathered for the Lord's Supper
 - Consistent Message - containing theological ideas compatible with other accepted Christian writings

Summary

- By Revelation God communicates God's self and what it means to be truly human in relation to the divine.
- The truth of Revelation is spiritually important having essential value for salvation.
- Revelation comes in a finally decisive way in Jesus, the incarnated Word of God.
- Revelation demands a positive response on the part of those to whom it comes.

**“Ignorance of
Scripture is ignorance
of Christ.”**

St. Jerome,
Commentary on Isaiah