



National Bible Week

THE BIBLE: A BOOK OF FAITH

Excerpts from the *General Directory of Catechesis*

The transmission of Revelation by the Church, the work of the Holy Spirit

42. The Revelation of God, culminating in Jesus Christ, is destined for all mankind: “He (God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).⁹³

In virtue of his universal salvific will, God has ordained that Revelation should be transmitted to all peoples and to all generations and should remain always in its entirety.

43. To fulfill this divine plan, Jesus Christ founded the Church, built on the Apostles. He gave them the Holy Spirit from the Father and sent them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. The Apostles, by words, deeds and writings, faithfully discharged this task.⁹⁴

This Apostolic Tradition is perpetuated in the Church by means of the Church herself. The entire Church, pastors and faithful, is responsible for its conservation and transmission. The Gospel is conserved whole and entire in the Church: the disciples of Jesus Christ contemplate it and meditate upon it unceasingly; they live it out in their everyday lives; they proclaim it in their missionary activity. As the Church lives the Gospel she is continually made fruitful by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit causes her to grow constantly in her understanding of the Gospel, prompts her and sustains the task of proclaiming the Gospel in every corner of the world.⁹⁵

44. The integral conservation of Revelation, the word of God contained in Tradition and Scripture, as well as its continuous transmission, are guaranteed in their authenticity. The Magisterium of the Church, sustained by the Holy Spirit and endowed with “the sure charism of truth,”⁹⁶ exercises the function of “authentically interpreting the word of God.”⁹⁷

45. The Church, “universal sacrament of salvation,” born of the Holy Spirit, transmits Revelation through evangelization; she announces the Good News of the salvific plan of the Father and in the sacraments, communicates his Divine gifts. To God who reveals himself is due this obedience of faith by which man adheres to the “Gospel of the grace of God,” (Acts 20:24) with full assent of the intellect and of the will. Guided by faith, by means of the gift of the Spirit, man succeeds in attaining to contemplate and to delight in the God of love, who in Christ has revealed the riches of his glory.⁹⁸

The ministry of the word in evangelization

50. The ministry of the word¹²⁶ is a fundamental element of evangelization. The presence of Christianity amongst different human groups and its living witness must be explained and justified by the explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ the Lord. “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.”¹²⁷ Those who are already disciples of Jesus Christ also require to be constantly nourished by the word of God so that they may grow in their Christian life.¹²⁸

The ministry of the word, within the context of evangelization, transmits Revelation, through the Church, by using human words. These, however, always refer to works: to those which God has done and continues to do, especially in the liturgy; to the witness of Christians; to the transforming action which these Christians achieve, together with so many men of good will, throughout the world. This human word of the Church is

the means used by the Holy Spirit to continue dialogue with humanity. He is, in fact, the principal agent of the ministry of the word, the one through whom “the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church—and through her in the world.”¹²⁹

The ministry of the word is exercised in “different forms.”¹³⁰ The Church, since apostolic times,¹³¹ in her desire to offer the word of God in the most appropriate manner, has realized this ministry in the most varied of ways.¹³² All of these, however, perform the essential and fundamental functions of the ministry of the word itself.

Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and Catechesis

127. The Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council emphasizes the fundamental importance of Sacred Scripture in the Church’s life. Together with tradition, it is the “supreme rule of faith,” since it transmits “the very word of God” and makes “to resound... the voice of the Holy Spirit.”⁴³⁵

For this reason the Church desires that in the ministry of the word, Sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position. In concrete terms, catechesis should be “an authentic introduction to *lectio divina*, that is, to a reading of the Sacred Scriptures done in accordance to the Spirit who dwells in the Church.”⁴³⁶ “In this sense, to describe Tradition and Scripture as sources for catechesis means that catechesis must imbibe and permeate itself with biblical and evangelical thought, spirit and attitudes by constant contact with them. It also means that catechesis will be as rich and as effective only to the extent that

these texts are read with the mind and heart of the Church.”⁴³⁷ In this ecclesial reading of the Scriptures, done in the light of Tradition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* plays a most important role.

128. Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are presented as two basic sources of inspiration for all catechetical activity in our time.

- Sacred Scripture, as “the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,”⁴³⁸ and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as a significant contemporary expression of the living Tradition of the Church and a sure norm for teaching the faith, are called, each in its own way and according to its specific authority, to nourish catechesis in the Church of today.
- Catechesis transmits the content of the word of God according to the two modalities whereby the Church possesses it, interiorizes it and lives it: as a narration of the history of salvation and as an explicitation of the Creed. Both Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* must inform biblical as well as doctrinal catechesis so that they become true vehicles of the content of God’s word.
- In the ordinary development of catechesis it is important that catechumens and those to be catechized can have trust in both Sacred Scripture and the local catechism. Catechesis, by definition, is nothing other than the living and meaningful transmission of these “documents of faith.”⁴³⁹

Notes

(93) Cf. DV 7.

(94) Cf. DV 7a.

(95) Cf. DV 8 and CCC 75-79.

(96) DV 10b; cf. CCC 85-87.

(97) LG 448; AG 1; GS 45; cf. CCC 774-776.

(98) Cf. *Col* 1,26.

(126) Cf. *Acts* 6:4. The Ministry of the Word of God is fostered in the Church by:

– the ordained ministers (cf. CIC 756-757);

– members of institutes of consecrated life in light of their consecration to God (cf. CIC 758);

– the lay faithful in light of their baptism and confirmation (cf. CIC 759). In regard to the term *ministry (servitium)*, it is necessary that all reference be made to the uniqueness and to the source of all ministry which is the *ministry of Christ*. To a certain

extent this applies also without ambiguity to the non-ordained faithful. In the original meaning, it expresses the work with which the members of the Church carry on the mission of Christ, both within the Church and throughout the world. However, when the term is distinguished from and compared with the various *munera and officia*, then it should be clearly noted that only in virtue of sacred ordination does the word obtain that full, univocal meaning that tradition has attributed to it (cf. John Paul II, Allocution at the Symposium on "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry" n. 4, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 11 May 1994).

(127) EN 22; cf. EN 51-53.

(128) Cf. EN 42-45, 54, 57.

(129) DV 8c.

(130) PO 4b; cf. CD 13c.

(131) Many diverse forms of this single ministry appear in the New Testament: "Proclamation, teaching, exhortation, prophecy, witness... this richness of expression is notable.

(132) The forms through which the ministry of the word is filtered are not in reality intrinsic to the Christian message as though to imply that diversity of form connotes different messages. These are, rather, accentuations or tones more or less explicitated and adapted to the situation of faith of each person or group of persons in their concrete situations.

(435) DV 21.

(436) MPD 9c. Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, IV, c, 3 l.c.

(437) CT 27; cf. Synod 1985, II B, a, 1.

(438) DV 9.

(439) Cf. MPD 9.