



National Bible Week

THE BIBLE: A BOOK OF FAITH

Excerpts from the National Directory of Catechesis

B. The Transmission of Revelation

God's Revelation is intended for all humanity because God "wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth."⁹⁸ To fulfill this divine plan, Jesus Christ founded the Church on the apostles, filled them with the Holy Spirit, and sent them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. This apostolic commission has been the life of the Church since her foundation. The Church has preserved the integrity and entirety of the Gospel since Christ entrusted it to her. The Gospel has been the source of her inspiration, the object of her contemplation, the subject of her proclamation, and the reason for her missionary activity. "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"⁹⁹ by the Holy Spirit.

Through Tradition, "the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes."¹⁰⁰ Handing on Divine Revelation to future generations of believers is a principal work of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christ commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which he himself proclaimed, and which he fulfilled in his own person. They did so through their own preaching, their example, and the institutions they established. They also communicated what they had seen and heard in writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These sacred books held the message of salvation that Christ entrusted to them and that they were to safeguard until the end of time. "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.'"¹⁰¹

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ must be proclaimed to every person and to all nations

in every age so that God's Revelation may reach the ends of the earth. "God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the spouse of his beloved Son [the Church]. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church—and through her in the world—leads believers to the full truth, and makes the Word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness."¹⁰²

God's self-revelation given through his only Son in the Holy Spirit remains living and active in the Church. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture together are the Deposit of Faith, which is guarded and protected by the Magisterium because it was given to us by Christ and cannot change. The transmission of that Revelation, in its integrity, is entrusted, by Divine Commission, to the Magisterium, to the Successor of St. Peter and the Successors of the Apostles. In a harmonious collaboration with the Magisterium in the Church's mission of evangelization, all the members of the People of God, priests, deacons, men and women religious, and the lay faithful, hand on the faith by proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and communicating God's gift of his own divine life in the sacraments.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents and preserves the deposit of faith. The deposit of faith is the heritage of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition and handed on in the Church from the time of the apostles—a heritage from which the Magisterium draws all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed. "Catechesis will find in this genuine, systematic presentation of the faith and of Catholic doctrine a totally reliable way to present, with renewed fervor, each and every part of the Christian message to the people of our time. This text will pro-

vide every catechist with sound help for communicating the one, perennial deposit of faith within the local Church.”²²³

Sacred Scripture has a preeminent position in catechesis because Sacred Scripture “present[s] God’s own Word in unalterable form” and “make[s] the voice of the holy Spirit resound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles.”²²⁴ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is intended to complement Sacred Scripture. Together with Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture constitutes the supreme rule of faith.

In practice, this means that catechesis must be permeated with biblical and evangelical thought, spirit, and attitudes through constant use of and reference to the word of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is not superior to the word of God but is, rather, at its service. Each nourishes the ministry of catechesis: “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.”²²⁵

In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* retrieves several important aspects of the catechetical tradition of the Church Fathers, who placed a high priority on the baptismal catechumenate in the life of the local churches. They emphasized the gradual and progressive movement of Christian initiation and formation through a series of stages and rituals. This was acknowledged when the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the adult catechumenate largely as it was celebrated and preserved in the patristic tradition.²²⁶

67. Resources in General

A. Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture, the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has a preeminent position in the life of the Church and especially in the ministry of evangelization and catechesis. The earliest forms of Christian catechesis made regular use of the Old Testament and the personal witness of the apostles and disciples that would become the New Testament. Much of the catechesis in the Patristic period took the form of commentary on the word of God

contained in Sacred Scripture. Through all the ages of the Church, study of Sacred Scripture has been the cornerstone of catechesis. The Second Vatican Council advised that catechesis, as one form of the ministry of the word, should be nurtured and should thrive in holiness through the word of Scripture.⁸¹⁷ Catechesis should take Sacred Scripture as its inspiration, its fundamental curriculum, and its end because it strengthens faith, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spiritual life. “Scripture provides the starting point, foundation, and norm of catechetical teaching.”⁸¹⁸

Catechesis should assume the thought and perspective of Sacred Scripture and make frequent, direct use of the biblical texts themselves. “The presentation of the gospels should be done in such a way as to elicit an encounter with Christ, who provides the key to the whole biblical revelation and communicates the call of God that summons each one to respond.”⁸¹⁹

Sacred Scripture is also the primary source in the explanation of the word of God that is a central function of catechesis. Catechesis rooted in Sacred Scripture should

- “Initiate a person in a correct understanding and fruitful reading of the Bible”⁸²⁰
- 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”⁸²¹
- “Bring about the discovery of the divine truth it contains and evoke as generous a response as is possible to the message God addresses through his word to the whole human race”⁸²²
- “Proceed from the historical context of divine revelation so as to present persons and events of the Old and New Testaments in the light of God’s overall plan”⁸²³
- “Make particular use of stories, both those of the New Testament and those of the Old”⁸²⁴
- “Single out the Decalogue”⁸²⁵
- “Make use of the prophetic oracles, the wisdom teaching, and the great discourses in the gospels such as the Sermon on the Mount”⁸²⁶

Notes

- 98 1 Tm 2:4.
99 Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1998), no. 44.
100 DV, no. 8.
101 DV, no. 7.
102 DV, no. 8.
- 223 LM, p. xv.
224 DV, no. 21.
225 GDC, no. 128.
226 Cf. SC, no. 64.
- 818 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
819 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
820 Message to the People of God (October 27, 1977).
821 Message to the People of God (October 27, 1977).
822 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
823 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
824 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
825 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.
826 The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 39.