

Chapter 2

Divine Revelation: How Does God Reveal Himself to Us?

Reading the Catechism: Paragraphs 50-100

“It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God’s most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”

– Vatican II: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
Dei Verbum, 10

The question of how we can come to know God has been one of the most challenging questions posed to man throughout the centuries. How can human beings, who are finite and limited by space and time, possibly come to know the transcendent and eternal God?

As we addressed in the last chapter, there are two ways in which we can come to know God. We can come to imperfect and partial knowledge of him through our *reason* alone. But it is through our faith in what he reveals to us about himself, which we call *divine Revelation*, that we come to a true and more complete knowledge of him and thus enter into a personal and intimate relationship with him. It is not an either/or, but the two are indeed the “wings” upon which our spirit rises to the knowledge of the living and true God.

In this chapter we will look more closely at the means by which God reveals himself to his people, how Christ’s Church has handed on that Revelation through the centuries, and where we find the fullness of God’s Revelation today.

God Reveals Himself through Divine Revelation

God does not desire that we have an imperfect and limited knowledge of him. Rather, because of his love for us, he wants us to truly know him and the greatness of his love and mercy and understand his plan of life for us.

Even when we lost communion and intimate knowledge of him through the first sin, God did not condemn us, but rather out of love and mercy for us he chose to reveal himself so that we could once again know him and love him in a very intimate and personal way. Therefore, we come to a full and complete knowledge of God through faith in his Revelation, which surpasses the capacities of our human reason. Divine Revelation does not contradict reason, but rather builds upon it and perfects it so that we can come to know truths about God that were lost to our reason after the first sin. In fact, through divine Revelation, our human reason is being healed and restored to its original state in which we enjoy living in the knowledge and contemplation of God, for which our reason and intellect were made. Man no longer needs to search for the knowledge of the divine for which he thirsts, for God has fully revealed himself to us through Jesus Christ.

God First Reveals Himself Gradually

God does not immediately fully reveal himself to man, but he gradually reveals himself over time to slowly and patiently prepare humanity for his ultimate gift of revelation and salvation in Jesus Christ. For God the Father knew that the human family would not be able to handle a full and immediate revelation of himself. So he initiates what we call salvation history, or the **economy of salvation**, in which he slowly and gradually reveals himself and his divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ throughout the centuries until in the fullness of time he fully reveals himself to us through his only Son.

Why does God reveal himself in this way? It is because our loving Father and Creator knows us better than we know ourselves and knows that our wounded human nature needed to be gradually brought back into his light.

Have you ever been in total darkness and then had someone turn on a very bright light? It hurts your eyes and you cannot see, even in

the light. However, if you gradually brighten the light, you can see more and more clearly without your eyes being hurt.

Another even better example is the nature of how we learn. If I want to teach someone who knows nothing about algebra, I cannot start with a very difficult equation and expect them to understand or solve the problem. I have to start with numbers and counting, then simple addition and subtraction, then multiplication and division, etc. There is a certain method of steps and procedures; a “pedagogy,” or gradual teaching and revealing, that one must go through that builds a foundation of understanding. This understanding must be built upon each previous step before we can get to that equation. I cannot just simply put down an algebra book in front of them and expect them to learn and understand.

The same is true for the human family and God’s Revelation. If he had just come down in all his glory, majesty, and power and fully revealed himself to man after the first sin, man would not have been able to understand or grasp all that he is! So he came to us in what we call a “divine pedagogy,” in which he patiently and gradually revealed to the human family who he is and his divine plan. He slowly taught us through both words and deeds his identity and his loving plan of salvation so that in the fullness of time, when he sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to both fully reveal God to man and man to himself, we would be ready and prepared to accept him.

The Old Testament

It is in the Old Testament of the Bible where we read and come into contact with God’s gradual revelation. The Old Testament is the dramatic story through which God reveals to us the truths about creation, the human person, his plan for marriage and family, the first sin and the fall of humanity, and then his merciful response and the unfolding of his plan of salvation.

God’s gradual revelation has a two-fold purpose: 1) To slowly reveal to the human family who he is and his plan of salvation to be accomplished through his Son, Jesus Christ, and 2) to gather together his chosen people, Israel, as the “emerging Church” so that in the fullness of time, Christ will bring about the unity of the entire human race in the universal, or Catholic Church.

Therefore, throughout the Old Testament we see God offering a series of covenants through which he reveals himself and also gathers and prepares his chosen people for the coming of Christ. A covenant

is when God solemnly promises certain things to his people and they, in turn, promise to be faithful in their words and actions. Although the people of the Old Testament are constantly being unfaithful to his covenants, God again and again offers new and more profound covenants to his people until at last, Jesus Christ seals the New and Everlasting Covenant between God and man in his blood.

Since the plan of salvation that was gradually revealed in the Old Testament is for the dual purpose of preparing God's people for the coming of Christ and the establishment of his Church, we see Christ and the Church as much in the Old Testament as in the New Testament. However, we do not see Christ explicitly, but foreshadowed in different events, characters, and prophesy. For example:

- Moses is a type or foreshadowing of Christ. Moses delivered the chosen people from slavery to the Egyptians, which is a foreshadowing of Christ who will come to save all of humanity from slavery to sin. (Ex 12:31-36)
- Christ is also prophesized in many of the writings of the great prophets, especially Isaiah, who tells us:
 - The Messiah is coming and will be born of a virgin. (Isa 7:14)
 - He will rule Israel with justice, and the spirit of the Lord will be upon Him. (Isa 11:1-9)
 - The Messiah will be a suffering servant who will bear our sins and be crushed for our infirmities. (Isa 53)

In many other remarkable ways, the Old Testament both gradually reveals and foreshadows God's plan of salvation that in the fullness of time will be fulfilled in Christ. We will be taking an even closer look at the Old Testament in the next chapter on the Bible.

Jesus Christ: The Fullness of God's Revelation

“In times past God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe.” (Heb 1:1-2) God has revealed all things through his Son, Jesus Christ, for he is the fullness of God's Revelation. It was the revelation of Christ for which God gradually prepared his chosen people in the Old Testament, and it is in the revelation of Jesus Christ that God communicates to us all who he is and all that he desires for

us and pledges to us in the New and Everlasting Covenant. Jesus is the climax and fullness of God's Revelation; all things are revealed in him. Jesus, who is both human and divine, is the definitive Revelation of God, and he also reveals man to himself.

Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as "a man to men." He "speaks the words of God" (Jn 3:34), and completes the work of salvation which His Father gave Him to do (see Jn 5:36; 17:4). To see Jesus is to see His Father (Jn 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal. (DV, 4)

Since Christ is the fullness of God's Revelation, there is no new revelation to come. Everything that God wishes to communicate to the human family is communicated in his life and ministry. *Divine Revelation is fully manifested and completed in the person of Jesus Christ.*

However, Christ entrusted to the Church a Sacred **deposit of faith** that is to be handed down and applied to each generation throughout history until the end of time. This deposit of faith contains the fullness of revelation manifested in Christ. As a result, the Church, from the time of the apostles and throughout the centuries, has faithfully preserved, handed on, and prayerfully and lovingly pondered Christ's words, deeds, teachings, and commands in order to bring the entire human race to the light and freedom of Christ.

The Transmission of Divine Revelation

Now we will address exactly how God chose to preserve, hand on, and interpret to each generation the fullness of his Revelation throughout history until the end of time.

Currently there are over 30,000 different Christian denominations in the United States alone. They all have, in one way or another, different beliefs concerning exactly what Christ has revealed to us. So, where can we find the fullness of God's Revelation, and where can we

find the authoritative teaching of Christ? This is one of the fundamental issues that divide Christians today!

Many Christians claim that the fullness of what Christ revealed and his authoritative teaching is in the Bible alone, and all that Christ desired to communicate to us is contained within its pages. However, as we will explore, Christ first established a Church with a teaching authority founded upon the apostles and their successors. These men, entrusted with the teaching authority of Christ himself, hand on faithfully the entire deposit of faith that is contained in both Sacred Tradition, which is the oral and living teaching of the apostles, as well as Sacred Scripture, which is that part of Tradition that has been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is the teaching authority of the Church, Sacred Tradition, and Sacred Scripture that fully contain and faithfully hand on the entire deposit of faith entrusted by Christ to his Church.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how Christ himself first established an apostolic Church founded upon the authority of the apostles, how the apostles first handed on Sacred Tradition through their oral teaching and example, and how Sacred Scripture was first written in the early Church, eventually leading to the gradual compilation of the New Testament in the first centuries of the Church. Thus, we see how even today, two thousand years later, that Scripture, Tradition, and the teaching authority of the Catholic Church contain, safeguard, and hand on the fullness of Christ's Revelation.

Jesus Chose to Institute an Apostolic Church

The question really comes down to how did Christ desire that his Revelation be handed down throughout the centuries? When we examine the life and ministry of Christ, it becomes very clear that he willed to establish an apostolic Church in which he entrusted to the twelve apostles all that he is: his life, ministry, teachings, and mission.

Jesus chooses and prepares the twelve apostles

What is the first thing that Jesus did at the beginning of his public ministry after being baptized in the Jordan? Did he write the Bible? Did he teach the multitudes? No. He chose his apostles. He chose them at the beginning of his ministry because he wanted them to be the unique and privileged witnesses of his life, ministry, and teachings in order to prepare them to hand on the Gospel to the world. He

chose them because it was his plan to have a Church that was guided by the apostles who would be his teachers and witnesses to the entire world. “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mt 4:19) He chose the apostles as the ones who would go out into the world to gather men and women for Christ! But he first needed to teach them and train them. He needed them to accompany him for three years in order to know him intimately, follow his example, and be strengthened by his presence – all to prepare them to be the ones who hand on all that he will entrust to them.

Jesus also prepared the apostles for the mission of transmitting the Gospel by revealing to them privileged teachings and allowing them to witness crucial events during his ministry. Imagine all of the conversations and teachings he must have had with the apostles during those three years. Imagine all that he must have been able to tell them and teach them concerning his mission, his identity, and his plan. We see in Scripture that the apostles had many privileged moments and teachings. For example:

- When the apostles asked Jesus why he taught in parables, Jesus replied that to them it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it has not been given. (Mt 13:10-11; Lk 8:9-11; Mk 4:10-11)
- Jesus took the apostles aside and predicted to them that the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, suffer and die under the Gentiles, and rise again on the third day. (Mt 20:17-19; Lk 9:22)
- On the Mount of Olives, the apostles came to Jesus privately and asked him what will be the signs of his coming and of the close of the age, and Jesus revealed the signs to them. (Mt 24; Mt 25; Mk 13)
- Jesus took Peter, James, and John up the mountain with him where he was transfigured before their eyes. (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36)

Other examples are numerous in which the apostles received privileged teachings and are the sole and unique witnesses to important and paradigm events in the life of Jesus.

Jesus gives the apostles his authority

All throughout his life and ministry, both before and after his death and Resurrection, Jesus is seen giving his authority directly to the

apostles. No one else in the New Testament is given this unique and powerful mission to act in the name of the Son of God. *Jesus bestowed authority specifically upon the apostles to share in Christ's mission in the building of the Church through teaching, governing, and ministering in his name.*

Teaching:

Many times the apostles were instructed by Christ himself to go out into the world and to teach in his name. The apostles are the sole authoritative teachers who have received their teaching authority from the very words and actions of Christ. For example:

- Jesus told the apostles, "Whoever listens to you, listens to me. Whoever rejects you, rejects me. And whoever rejects me, rejects the one who sent me." (Lk 10:16)
- Before the ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded, and promised to be with them always until the close of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)
- Jesus appeared to the apostles and commanded them to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation, and they went forth and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them through many signs. (Mk 16:15-20)

Thus, Christ is knowingly and willingly granting the apostles his own authority so that when he entrusts all that he has revealed to them, they will be the authoritative and convincing teachers who will transmit to all generations the Gospel of Christ.

Governing:

Jesus also gave the apostles the authority to guide and govern the Church. Not only are the apostles appointed by Christ to be the authoritative teachers in the Church, but they are also given the authority by Christ to govern the Church in all matters: doctrine, worship, and discipline. For example:

- Jesus called Peter the rock upon which he will build his Church, giving him the keys of the kingdom and announcing that whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt 16:15-20)
- Jesus told the apostles that they would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in his kingdom. (Lk 22:28-30)

- Even Paul, writing to the Corinthians, explained that it is God himself who has established and commissioned the apostles and given them the Holy Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee of their guidance and authority. (2 Cor 1:21-22)

Thus, the governing authority of the apostles is not established by man, but by God himself.

Ministering:

The apostles were also given the authority by Christ to minister in his name. Through this authority, they came to share in a unique way in the mission of Christ as the instruments through which he administers his graces and gifts. He willed that the apostles would fully participate with him in his ministry of sanctification, forgiveness of sins, and spiritual and physical healing. For example:

- Before the Ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Mt 28:19)
- At the Last Supper, Jesus granted the apostles the authority to make present the Eucharist when he commanded, "do this in memory of me." (Lk 22:19)
- Jesus appeared to the apostles and breathed the Holy Spirit on them, giving them the power to forgive and retain sins. (Jn 20:22-23)
- Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, telling them to cast the spirits out and to heal every disease and infirmity; and he sent them forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Mt 10:1-15; Mk 6:7-13)

Christ gives Peter authority over the Church

While all the apostles were given the authority and the mission by Christ to teach, govern, and minister in his name, Peter was set apart and given a unique role by Christ that emphasized his teaching and governing authority over all the apostles and other disciples. This is seen most profoundly in Matthew 16:

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to

them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah. (Mt 16:13-20)

In this very powerful scene, Jesus is asking the apostles who others think he is, but in reality, he is asking *them* who *they* think he is. While the other apostles give many different answers, Peter is the one who sees the real identity of Christ as the Messiah and responds, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus responds, "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." Jesus is revealing a profound truth. Peter has been given a unique gift, or charism, by the Father to know and teach the truth, and his knowledge of Jesus' identity is a result of this special gift. *Jesus recognizes this gift and special role of Peter and bestows on him a unique teaching and governing authority over all the apostles and the entire Church.*

Jesus changes Peter's name from Simon to Peter, which means "Rock" (Greek *petros*). The changing of one's name in the Scriptures means a new identity, mission, and calling. For example, God changed Abram's name to Abraham when he responded to God's invitation of faith, and he became the father of all of God's people. In the same way here, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter to show his new identity and mission as the "rock" and head of the Church.

Jesus calls Peter "rock," and it is upon "this rock" that Jesus will build his Church. Why does Jesus build his Church upon Peter? *It is fundamentally in response to Peter already exercising his teaching authority given to him by the Father.* He has received a gift of wisdom to know the truth about Christ, and also a teaching charism to proclaim it with clarity and without error.

No mere human revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Messiah. He had not yet told Peter that he was the Messiah, and many were still seriously grappling with exactly who Jesus was. But Peter was given the gift to know the truth, and he faithfully proclaimed it to the

apostles. He will be the one who will lead, teach, and strengthen the apostles and the other followers after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.

It will be this Church, founded upon the teaching and governing authority of Peter, that even the gates of Hell will not prevail against. Thus, another fundamental point: If Peter has been given a special teaching charism to know and proclaim the truth, then the Father, through the working of the Holy Spirit, will also give that same teaching charism to Peter's successors as well. The Church has remained intact and faithful to Christ's teaching for over two thousand years because of this unique teaching authority given to the successors of Peter: the Popes in communion with the bishops.

Recognizing Peter's gift of teaching the truth, Jesus then grants him a unique and profound authority: "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jesus entrusts to Peter the keys to the Church! What does this mean? In Jesus' time, when the master was going to leave his estate for a time, he would entrust to his head servant the keys to the estate. This servant, who possessed the keys, was entrusted with the full authority of his master while he was away. Thus, the servant does not replace the master, but possesses his authority in his absence. Peter becomes the "Vicar" of Christ, that is, he has been given the full authority of the Master over his Church until he comes again. However, with this authority comes great responsibility. The servant who is given the keys of the master is expected to take care of and run the estate in the way the master desires. *In the same way, Peter's authority is one of service and obedience to the will and teachings of Christ. It is the sole responsibility of Peter and his successors to authoritatively and faithfully teach and hand on what Christ has taught and willed.*

This bestowing upon Peter the teaching and governing authority of the Church is also seen in John's Gospel. After his Resurrection, Jesus and Peter have a profound and personal encounter on the shores of the Sea of Galilee:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him,

"Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep." (Jn 21:15-18)

In this powerful passage, Jesus three times exhorts Peter to "feed and tend my sheep." This is a very deliberate and meaningful action by Christ. He is restoring Peter and forgiving him for his three-fold denial during Jesus' Passion. But even more importantly, Jesus is commissioning Peter as the head and shepherd of the Church, for in the Scriptures, three always means divine and complete. Just before Jesus' departure when he ascends into heaven, we see the divine commissioning of Peter as the head of the Church, responsible for feeding (teaching and ministering) and tending (governing) the Church.

In addition, Peter is seen throughout the entire New Testament as the leader of the apostles and the head of the Church. See *Tradition and Teaching Office of the Church in the New Testament* at the end of this chapter for numerous examples.

The apostles and their successors are the authoritative teachers in the early Church

After the Ascension of Christ, the apostles and their successors became the authoritative teachers of the Gospel, handing on and protecting the traditions entrusted to them by Christ. Not only did they begin their apostolic ministry of preaching and handing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but as the early Church began to grow and emerge, they also began to choose successors to continue the ministry entrusted to them by Christ.

First, the apostles knew the importance of choosing successors to continue their apostolic ministry. This is no more clearly seen than in the choosing of a successor of Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Christ and then killed himself:

During those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (there was a group of about one hundred and twenty persons in the one place). He said, "My brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled which the holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who was the guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was numbered among us and was allotted a share in this

ministry. He bought a parcel of land with the wages of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out...

Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place." Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15-26)

Here we already see, even before Pentecost, the importance that the apostles placed on choosing successors to carry on the apostolic ministry.

We also see other examples of choosing successors to the apostolic ministry. For example:

- The twelve chose seven men from among the disciples to assist in the preaching of the word of God, and they prayed and laid hands upon them. (Acts 6:3-6)
- After the council held at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders immediately appointed men to go out to the new churches and proclaim the definitive teaching in order to settle disputes about circumcision. (Acts 15:22-28)
- Paul was appointed a preacher and an apostle to teach the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Tim 2:7)
- Paul commanded Timothy to take what he had heard from him and before many witnesses, entrust those teachings to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:2)
- Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders in each town in order to clarify the teachings handed down to them. (Titus 1:5)
- After preaching the gospel to a city, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for the new Christians in each church. (Acts 14:21-23)

Not only did the apostles choose successors, but their successors were also entrusted with the Gospel and were to hand on the traditions given to them by Christ. Thus, their successors fully shared in the

apostolic ministry given to the apostles by Christ himself. They were the unique and authoritative teachers of the New Testament Church who taught, preserved, and defended Gospel Tradition. (See *Tradition and Teaching Office of the Church in the New Testament* at the end of this chapter.)

As the early Church continued to grow and spread across the ancient world in the second and third centuries, the writings of the early church Fathers also clearly show that the bishops, as the successors of the apostles, continued to be the ones who had the authority to teach, govern, and minister in the name of Christ. They were charged with faithfully preserving and handing on the teachings of Christ entrusted to them. In fact, the teaching authority of the Pope and bishops as preserving the true teaching of Christ and the unity of the Church is one of the most common themes in these early writings. Here are just a few examples:

“The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus, the Christ, was sent from God. Thus Christ is from God and the apostles from Christ. In both instances the orderly procedure depends on God’s will. And so the Apostles, after receiving their orders and being fully convinced by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and assured by God’s word, went out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit to preach the good news that God’s kingdom was about to come. They preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Holy Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of future believers.”

St. Clement, *Letter to the Corinthians*—80 A.D.

“Those indeed who belong to God and to Jesus Christ—they are with the bishop. And those who repent and come to the unity of the Church—they too shall be of God, and will live according to Jesus Christ. Do not err, my brethren: if any one follows a schismatic, he will not inherit the kingdom of God. If any man walks about with strange doctrine, he cannot lie down with the passion. Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of His Blood; one altar, as there is one bishop, with the presbytery, and my fellow servants, the deacons.”

“I hasten to urge you to harmonize your actions with God’s mind. For Jesus Christ—that life from which we can’t be torn—is the Father’s mind, as the bishops too, appointed the world over, reflect the mind of Jesus Christ.”

St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians*—110 A.D.

“And the Church of the Corinthians has continued in the correct doctrine to the time of Primus, who has become Bishop in Corinth, and with whom I conversed at length on my way to Rome, when I spent some days with the Corinthians, during which time we were mutually refreshed in the correct doctrine. When I had come to Rome, I made a succession up to Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius. And after Anicetus, Soter succeeded; and after him, Eleutherus. In each succession and in each city there is a continuance of that which is proclaimed by the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord.”

“At that time there flourished in the Church Hegesippus, whom we know from what has gone before, and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, and another bishop, Pinytus of Crete, and besides these, Phillip, and Apollinarius, and Melito, and Musanus, and finally, Irenaeus. From them has come down to us in writing, the sound and orthodox faith received from tradition.”

Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church*—150 A.D.

“Although there are many who believe that they themselves hold to the teachings of Christ, there are yet some among them who think differently from their predecessors. The teaching of the Church has indeed been handed down through an order of succession from the apostles and remains in the churches even to the present time. That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at variance with ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.”

Origen, *The Fundamental Doctrines*—A.D. 225

“The Church is one, and as she is one, cannot be both within and without. For if she is with Novatian, she was not with [Pope] Cornelius. But if she was with Cornelius, who succeeded the bishop Fabian by lawful ordination, and whom, beside the honor of the priesthood the Lord glorified also with martyrdom, Novatian is not in the Church; nor can

he be reckoned as a bishop, who, succeeding to no one, and despising the evangelical and apostolic tradition, sprang from himself. For he who has not been ordained can neither have not hold to the Church in any way.”

Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters 75:3—253 A.D.*

Christ’s Revelation Is Transmitted through Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture

We have clearly seen 1) that Jesus intended to establish an apostolic Church founded on the teaching and authority of the apostles and 2) how the apostles and their successors began to preach and hand on all that Christ had entrusted to them. But exactly how has all that Christ revealed to us been handed down throughout the centuries? We will now explore how Christ’s Revelation, the Sacred deposit of faith, is transmitted through Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the authority of the apostles and their successors so that the fullness of what Christ has revealed to us is faithfully handed down until the end of time.

As the New Testament Church began to emerge and grow, the teaching of the apostles was handed on in two ways: 1) “Orally by the apostles who handed on by the spoken word of their preaching, by their example, by the institutions they established, and what they had received [from Christ].” (CCC, 76) We call this Sacred Tradition. 2) “In writing by the apostles or other men associated with the apostles, who under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing.” (CCC, 76) We call this Sacred Scripture or the New Testament of the Bible.

St. Paul also explains how the revelation of Christ is handed on: “Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.” (2 Thess 2:15) Here we clearly see the means through which the Sacred deposit of faith entrusted to the apostles and their successors is transmitted to each generation: a teaching office (“that you were taught”), Sacred Tradition (“by oral statement”), and Sacred Scripture (“or by a letter of ours”).

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." This sacred tradition, therefore, and

Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face (see 1 Jn 3:2). (DV, 7)

Sacred Tradition

Sacred Tradition is the living witness and presence of Christ, which was entrusted to the apostles and their successors through their authoritative teaching, their example, and the institutions they established. Sacred Tradition is none other than Christ himself as handed on throughout history (tradition means “to carry across”). This oral Tradition continues to be passed on primarily through apostolic succession, that is, through the teachings of the Pope and the bishops united to him. Tradition is also handed on through other various ways through the life and ministry of the Church.

Tradition is handed on through apostolic succession.

Tradition is passed on through the teaching and governing of the successors of Peter and the apostles, the **Pope** and the **bishops**, who through **apostolic succession** have been given the authority to teach and govern by Christ himself. As we saw, this was seen so clearly in both the New Testament itself and in the writings of the early church Fathers. This teaching office has continued in an unbroken line of authority even to this day. The Pope and the bishops, as the present day successors of the apostles, are called the **Magisterium**, or teaching office of the Church (*magistra* in Latin means teacher). They have the responsibility of seeing that the Sacred deposit of faith left to us by Christ and handed on through Tradition and Scripture is preserved, defended, and handed on in its fullness to all generations until the end of time:

And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (see 2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (see Jude 1:3) Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which

contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes. (DV, 8)

Thus, the Pope and the bishops do not have the authority to invent new doctrine or to delete or change what has been entrusted to them. Their authority comes from Christ himself who commands them to faithfully hand on, untarnished and complete, all that he taught them and commanded them.

Tradition is also passed on in the very life of the Church.

Sacred Tradition is also passed on through the lives and faith of all the faithful who are in alignment with the teachings of the Church. This is called the *sensus fidei*, or the sense of the faithful. Tradition lies within the life of faith lived out in each member of the Church as we continuously ponder and live out all that Christ has given to us and commanded of us. Thus, the richness of the Tradition of the Church can be found in the simple prayer and faith of the common man.

Tradition is also passed on through the liturgical life of the Church.

Lex orandi, lex credendi: “The law of prayer is the law of faith.” The liturgy is an important element of Sacred Tradition, because the Church is continuously pondering and meditating upon the mysteries of Christ and celebrating the mighty works of God accomplished in Christ. It is similar to when our families gather for feasts and holidays to celebrate, ponder, and hand on family traditions and memories. Since the Church is the family of Christ, when we come together in the liturgy to celebrate God’s salvation in Christ, we also encounter and hand on the Tradition of the Church through our prayers and worship.

Sacred Tradition is a living Tradition.

Sacred Tradition is a living Tradition, not one that is stagnant. While the fundamental truths of Sacred Tradition revealed by Christ and entrusted to the Church do not change, they do unfold over time as the Church continues to ponder and live out its mysteries. This is a crucial point. While doctrine does not change, it does develop as the Church better grasps its meaning. Fundamentalism is a reaction to the living Tradition of the Church; it sees Tradition as dead or stagnant. It is the Magisterium, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which

defends, protects, interprets, and applies the deposit of faith to each generation. It is through this handing on of Christ himself that the Church comes to have a better grasp of what Christ revealed. As Vatican II explains:

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Lk 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her. (DV, 8)

Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture is a part or an aspect of Sacred Tradition that has been “crystallized” in written form under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Very early in Christian history, various aspects of Tradition were crystallized in written form. This was done by some of the apostles or those closely associated with the apostles who, for various reasons, put down into writing what was already being handed down through Sacred Tradition.

For example, Luke, a close companion of Paul, wrote his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles as a legal defense for Paul at his trial in Rome. Many of Paul’s letters were written as letters of teaching and encouragement to church communities that he had already established in places like Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, and Philippi. Paul also wrote to individuals, like Timothy and Titus, to whom he had handed on the apostolic ministry and left to oversee local churches, to teach and exhort them in their ministry. However, as the Church read and pondered these writings, certain writings were chosen and set aside as being inspired by God in a unique way. These writings were chosen by the Magisterium of the Church and were declared as the “canon” of the New Testament.

The canon of Scripture was complete by the fourth century of the Church and was affirmed by several local synods, or gatherings of

bishops, especially the Synod of Hippo in 393 A.D. and the Synod of Carthage in 397 A.D. The Council of Trent officially defined the canon in 1546 A.D. after the Protestant Reformation questioned the integrity of the canon. Some of the Protestant reformers removed certain books of the canon because it did not support their reformed theology, such as 1 and 2 Maccabees and much of the Wisdom literature (this will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter on the Bible).

Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium together hand on the fullness of Christ's Revelation

Since Sacred Scripture is the earliest crystallization of Sacred Tradition and the inspired Word of God, it is given a special place in Tradition, sitting next to Tradition as the twin source of divine Revelation. They are uniquely and intrinsically interwoven in the fact that Scripture can never be interpreted apart from Tradition, and all truths of Tradition are latent within Scripture. Thus, it is both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition handed on and interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church that constitutes the fullness of divine Revelation:

Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. 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, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. 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, 10)

Therefore, Scripture, although very important, is only a part of Sacred Tradition, committed to writing. Scripture does not contain in

itself all that Christ revealed. The apostle John testifies to this point at the end of his Gospel: “There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.”

(Jn 21:25)

In addition, Scripture can only be properly interpreted and fully understood in light of the Tradition from which it comes. While Scripture provides the material part, or the “crystallization” of Tradition, it is Tradition that sheds its light on and pulls together the full meaning of the Scriptures. For example, the Scriptures are like bricks, they hold within themselves those important and foundational aspects of Tradition that has been committed to writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tradition is the mortar; it pulls together the full meaning of the Scriptures and gives them meaning, keeps them in the proper context, and brings out their significance. If you only had bricks, you would just have an unorganized pile of bricks. But Scripture and Tradition together make a building, the Church, with the fullness of all that Christ desires to reveal and hand on to us.

Since the Scriptures are a part of Sacred Tradition “crystallized” into writing, they cannot and do not contradict the Tradition from which they come. In the same way, Sacred Tradition is latent throughout the Scriptures, whether explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, Scripture and Tradition do not contradict, but rather together contain the entire Sacred deposit of faith entrusted to the Church by Christ.

Finally, it is the Magisterium of the Church, the Pope and the bishops, who as successors of the apostles, have been given the authority by Christ to teach, pass on, interpret, apply, and defend the deposit of faith to each generation. Thus, the Magisterium is the authentic interpreter and guarantor of the Word of God, as expressed in both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. The Magisterium is like a referee, it determines what is truly in accordance with Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, and that Sacred Scripture is interpreted faithfully to Tradition. As Vatican II again explains:

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it

faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. (DV, 10)

The Catholic Church Contains the Fullness of Truth

Thus, Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium together are intimately joined together in faithfully transmitting to all generations the full and entire deposit of faith revealed by Christ and entrusted to the Church. They are like a three-legged stool. If all three legs are intact, the stool is on a sound foundation. However, if you remove one or two legs, the stool collapses into disunity and chaos. This has been seen throughout the history of Protestantism, which has reduced God's revelation to the Bible alone. Without Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium, interpreting the Bible has led to numerous divisions and debate. The "Bible alone" theory certainly has not brought continuity and unity throughout Christianity, but rather continues to cause divisions and disunity.

It is, in fact, the Catholic Church which has remained the one undivided Church that dates back to Christ himself. This is a hard truth for many, but the **Catholic Church** contains the fullness of Christ's Revelation that has been handed down throughout the centuries through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition under the guidance and authority of the successors of the apostles. No other Church can claim this. There is an unbroken history, Tradition, and line of authority. Other Christian churches, by abandoning Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium, have a fragment of the Church, a piece of it. But their roots are the Catholic Church; it is ultimately their true home. The Catholic Church, by preserving the fullness of Christ's teaching and way of life for over 2,000 years, contains within herself the fullness of truth and the Christian life as "the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Tim 3:15)

Tradition and Teaching Office of the Church in the New Testament

- I. The twelve apostles were chosen by Christ to be the unique witnesses of the life and mission of the Son of God in order to prepare them to hand on the Gospel to the world.
 - A. Christ chose the twelve apostles at the beginning of his public ministry to train them to be fishers of men.
 1. Jesus first called Simon Peter and Andrew to follow him and become fishers of men and they immediately dropped their nets and followed him. (Mt 4:18-20; Mk 1:16-19)
 2. Jesus called James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. (Mt 4:21-22; Mk 1:19-20)
 3. After the miracle of the wondrous catch of fish, Jesus told Peter, James, and John that they would soon be fishers of men and they left everything and followed him. (Lk 5:1-11)
 4. After praying all night to God, Jesus called his disciples together and chose from them twelve whom he called apostles. (Lk 6:12-16)
 5. After meeting Jesus, Andrew brought his brother Simon to him, and Jesus renamed him Peter. (Jn 1:40-42)
 - B. Christ prepared the apostles for the mission of transmitting the Gospel by revealing to them privileged teachings and allowing them to witness crucial events during his ministry.
 1. The apostles were given privileged teachings by Christ.
 - a. Jesus instructed the apostles to utter in the light, what he told them in the dark; and what was whispered to them, proclaim on the housetops. (Mt 10:27)
 - b. When the apostles asked Jesus why he taught in parables, Jesus told them that to them it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to others it has not been given. (Mt 13:10-11; Lk 8:9-11; Mk 4:10-11)
 - c. Jesus did not speak to the crowds without a parable, but privately to his apostles he explained everything. (Mk 4:34)
 - d. Jesus took the apostles aside and predicted to them that the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests

- and the scribes, suffer and die under the Gentiles, and rise again on the third day. (Mt 20:17-19; Lk 9:21-22)
- e. On the Mount of Olives, the apostles came to Jesus privately and asked Jesus what will be the signs of his coming and of the close of the age and Jesus revealed the signs to them. (Mt 24-25; Mk 13)
 - f. Jesus told the apostles privately that they are blessed, and that many prophets and kings desired to see what they see and hear what they hear, but did not see or hear. (Lk 10:23-24)
2. The apostles were the sole witnesses to important events during Christ's ministry.
 - a. Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain with him where he was transfigured before their eyes. (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36)
 - b. Jesus took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him in the garden when he had his agony and commanded them to remain there and watch with him. (Mt 26:37-38; Mk 14:33-34)
 - c. Jesus only took with him Peter, James and John when he raised Jarius' daughter from the dead. (Mk 5:37)
- II. Jesus bestowed authority specifically upon his apostles to uniquely share in Christ's mission in the building of the Church through teaching, governing, and ministering in his name.
- A. Jesus gave the apostles the authority to teach in his name and govern and guide the Church.
 1. The teaching authority of the apostles comes from Christ himself.
 - a. Jesus told the apostles, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me." (Lk 10:16)
 - b. Before the ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded, and promised to be with them always until the close of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)
 - c. Jesus appeared to the apostles and commanded them to go into the entire world and preach the Gospel to all creation, and they went forth and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them through many signs. (Mk 16:15, 20)

- d. Jesus foretold that the apostles would receive power from on high when the Holy Spirit comes and that they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
- e. The Gospel preached by Paul is not man's gospel, nor was he taught it, but it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11-12)
- f. Paul was thankful that the Thessalonians have received the word of God, which they have preached to them, not as coming from mere men but as truly from God, himself. (1 Thes 2:13)
- g. All who believed devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and the breaking of the bread. (Acts 2:42)
2. Jesus gave the apostles the authority to guide and govern the Church.
 - a. Jesus called Peter the rock upon which he will build his Church, giving him the keys of the kingdom and announcing that whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt 16:15-20)
 - b. Jesus told the apostles that they would sit on thrones in his kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Lk 22:28-30)
 - c. Paul explained that it is God himself who has established and commissioned the apostles and given the Holy Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee of their guidance and authority. (2 Cor 1:21-22)
 - d. The apostles were set apart by being commissioned by God from those who Paul labeled as merely "peddlers of God's word." (2 Cor 2:17)
 - e. Paul explained that their confidence comes from the fact that God has given them the authority to be his ministers of the New Covenant. (2 Cor 3:4-6)
 - f. Paul told the Corinthians that they themselves are the "letter of recommendation" showing that the apostles' authority comes from Christ himself. (2 Cor 3:2-3)
- B. Jesus gave the apostles the authority and power to administer the sacraments.
 1. Before the ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the

- name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
(Mt 28:19)
2. At the Last Supper, Jesus granted to the apostles the authority to make present the Eucharist when he commanded them to "Do this in remembrance of me."
(Lk 22:19)
 3. Jesus appeared to the apostles and breathed the Holy Spirit on them and gave them the power to forgive and retain sins. (Jn 20:22-23)
- C. Jesus gave authority to the apostles to rebuke evil spirits and heal the sick.
1. Jesus called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and infirmity, and he sent them forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Mt 10:1-15; Mk 6:7-13)
 2. Jesus gave the apostles authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon the entire enemy, and said that their names are written in heaven. (Lk 10:19-20)
- III. Peter was set apart and given a unique role by Christ that emphasized his teaching and governing authority over the apostles and the other disciples.
- A. Peter was the first apostle called by Christ in all four Gospels.
(Mt 4:18-20; Mk 1:16-19, Jn 1:42; Lk 5:1-11)
- B. Peter was given a special grace of the Father to recognize Christ as the Messiah.
1. Peter confesses at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and Jesus said that flesh and blood had not revealed this, but his Father in heaven.
(Mt 16:13-17)
 2. While they were alone, Jesus asked the apostles who they thought he was and Peter responded, "The Christ of God."
(Lk 9:18-20)
 3. After the Bread of Life discourse, Peter confessed that Jesus has the words of eternal life and is the Holy One of God. (Jn 6:68-69)
- C. Jesus commissioned Peter to be the head of the apostles and the head of the Church.
1. Jesus called Peter the rock upon which he would build his Church, giving him the keys of the kingdom and announcing that whatever he binds on earth will be bound

- in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt 16:18-19)
2. Jesus foretold Peter's denial and yet he commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren after he repents. (Lk 22:32)
 3. On the shore of the Sea of Tiberias Jesus commissioned Peter three times to feed and tend his sheep. (Jn 21:15-17)
- D. Jesus brought Peter with him to witness important events during his ministry.
1. Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain with him where he was transfigured before their eyes. (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36)
 2. Jesus only took with him Peter, James and John when he raised Jarius' daughter from the dead. (Mk 5:37)
 3. Jesus took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee when he has his agony in the garden and commanded them to remain there and watch with him. (Mt 26:37-38; Mk 14:33-34)
- E. At crucial times, Jesus called on Peter to lead the apostles.
1. Jesus called Peter to be an example of faith through coming to him by walking on the water. (Mt 14:28-33)
 2. When Jesus found the disciples sleeping in the garden, he rebuked Peter for not staying awake and praying. (Mt 26:40; Mk 14:37)
- F. After the Resurrection, Peter was portrayed as the head of the apostles and the Church.
1. Peter was the first of the apostles to witness evidence of the Resurrection.
 - a. When the women told the apostles what they had seen at the tomb, the apostles thought it was just an idle tale, but Peter rose and ran to the tomb and he looked in and saw the linen cloths by themselves and went home wondering what had happened. (Lk 24:10-12)
 - b. Peter and John both ran to the tomb, but Peter was the first to go in and investigate. (Jn 20:3-10)
 2. The disciples of Jesus recognized Peter's authority as the head of the apostles.
 - a. After discovering that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, Mary Magdalene went to Simon Peter and told him what she had seen. (Jn 20:1-2)

- b. When Peter and John ran to the tomb, even though John reached the tomb first, he did not go in but let Peter enter first to see what had happened.
(Jn 20:3-10)
3. Peter exercised his unique ministry as the head of the emerging Christian Church.
 - a. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached at Pentecost and three thousand souls were added to their number.
(Acts 2:14-41)
 - b. Peter was the one who stood and announced that there must be chosen one to be the successor to Judas to take his place among the Twelve. (Acts 1:15-25)
 - c. Peter was guided by the Holy Spirit in regards to the Gentiles being able to be members of the Church.
(Acts 11:3-18)
 - d. Upon hearing Peter's determination guided by the Holy Spirit, the circumcision party submitted to the Gentiles becoming Christians. (Acts 11:18)
 - e. During the debate with regard to circumcision of the new Christians, it is Peter who finally rose and spoke to the other apostles and elders with authority as the assembly listened in silence. (Acts 15:6-12)

IV. After the Ascension of Christ, the apostles and their successors became the authoritative teachers of the Gospel, handing on and protecting the traditions entrusted to them by Christ .

- A. The apostles realized the importance of choosing successors to continue their apostolic ministry.
 1. Peter stood and announced that there must be chosen one to be the successor to Judas in order to take his place among the Twelve and chose Matthias who had accompanied them during the time that Jesus was with them. (Acts 1:15-25)
 2. The Twelve chose seven men from among the disciples to assist in the preaching of the word of God and they prayed and laid hands upon them. (Acts 6:3-6)
 3. After the council held at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders immediately appointed men to go out to the new churches and proclaim the definitive teaching in order to settle these disputes about circumcision. (Acts 15:22-29)

4. James and Peter and John were reputed to be pillars, and gave Paul and Barnabas the "right hand of fellowship." (Gal 2:7-9)
 5. Paul was appointed a preacher and an apostle to teach the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Tim 2:7)
 6. Paul commanded Timothy to take what he had heard from him and before many witnesses entrust those teachings to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:2)
 7. Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders in each town in order to clarify the teachings handed down to them. (Titus 1:5)
 8. After preaching the Gospel to a city, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for the new Christians in each church. (Acts 14:21-23)
- B. The apostles and their successors were entrusted with the Gospel and were to hand on the traditions given to them by Christ.
1. The apostles and their successors were entrusted with the Gospel of Christ.
 - a. Speaking to the appointed elders of the churches of Ephesus, Paul told them that they must guard the churches, with which they had been entrusted, from false teachings. (Acts 20:28)
 - b. Paul explained that whatever was contrary to sound doctrine and the Gospel of God, which was entrusted to him, belonged to the lawless and the disobedient. (1 Tim 1:8-11)
 - c. Paul urged Timothy to follow the pattern of the sound words that he heard from him and to guard the truth that has been entrusted to him by the Holy Spirit who dwelled in them. (2 Tim 1:12-14)
 - d. Paul commanded Timothy to entrust the teaching of the apostles to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. (2 Tim 2:2)
 - e. Paul was entrusted with preaching God's word by the command of Christ. (Titus 1:3)
 - f. Paul had been entrusted with bringing the Gospel to the uncircumcised and Peter was entrusted with bringing the Gospel to the circumcised. (Gal 2:7)

2. The apostles and their successors handed on the traditions given to them by Christ.
 - a. At the beginning of his Gospel, Luke explained that he is compiling a narrative of the things that were accomplished among them, and were delivered to them, by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. (Lk 1:2)
 - b. Paul and Timothy traveled from city to city to pass on the teaching given by the apostles and elders for the churches to observe and the churches were strengthened in the faith. (Acts 16:4-5)
 - c. Paul commended the Corinthians for remembering him and maintaining the traditions as he had delivered to them. (1 Cor 11:2)
 - d. Paul received the institution of the Eucharist from the Lord and he also delivered it to the Corinthians. (1 Cor 11:23-26)
 - e. Paul handed on to the Corinthians the Gospel, which he himself received, and in which they will have salvation if they "hold fast" to it. (1 Cor 15:1-2)
 - f. Paul told the Philippians to do all the things that they have learned, received and heard from him. (Phil 4:9)
 - g. The author of the letter to the Hebrews told them to imitate the men who brought the word of God to them and not be led astray by false teachings. (Heb 13:7-9)
 - h. Paul instructed Timothy to continue in what he has learned from him and what he has firmly believed, and also to hold to what he has learned from the sacred writings, which are inspired by God and profitable for teaching. (2 Tim 3:14-16)
 - i. Paul instructed Timothy to command and teach the things he handed to him and to read the Scriptures to the public along with teaching and preaching. (1 Tim 4:11-14)
- C. The apostles and their successors preserved and defended the Gospel tradition handed to them from Christ.
 1. The apostles and their successors emphasized the importance of preserving and teaching the sound doctrine they had received from Christ.
 - a. A bishop was instructed to hold firm to the true word as taught, so that he would be able to give instruction

- in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9)
- b. Deacons were called to be serious and must hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. (1 Tim 3:8)
 - c. Titus was to teach only what befits sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)
 - d. Paul tells the Romans that their obedience to the "standard of teaching" given by the apostles leads to righteousness. (Rom 6:17-18)
 - e. Saul and Barnabas spent a year in Antioch to ensure the new Christians were taught well with sound doctrine. (Acts 11:26; 15:35)
 - f. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to go before the apostles and elders to clarify the apostles teaching regarding circumcision because it was causing much dissension and debate. (Acts 15:2)
 - g. After the council held at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders immediately appointed men to go out to the new churches and proclaim the definitive teaching in order to settle these disputes about circumcision. (Acts 15:22-28)
2. The apostles and their successors rebuke false teachings and teachers.
- a. Paul writes of Hymenae and Philetus who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. (2 Tim 2:17-18)
 - b. Those insubordinate men who teach without authority and confuse and upset entire families must be silenced because they have no right to teach. (Titus 1:11)
 - c. For a man who is factious, Titus is to admonish him once or twice and after doing so have nothing more to do with him. (Titus 3:11)
 - d. Paul urges the Romans to avoid those who create difficulties and dissensions in regard to the "doctrine" which you have been taught by the apostles. (Rom 16:17)
 - e. Paul admonishes the Galatians for so quickly deserting the true Gospel for a false gospel, and that anyone preaching a gospel different from the one received from Paul should be accursed. (Gal 1:6-9)

- f. Paul warns the Corinthians not to follow any false apostles, even if they are eloquent speakers. (2 Cor 11:4-6)
- g. Paul commands the brethren to keep away from anyone who is not in union with the "tradition" that they had received from the apostles. (2 Thes 3:6)
- h. Paul and Titus did not yield submission to the false teachers even for a moment in order to preserve the truth of the Gospel. (Gal 2:5)
- i. Even the demons recognized only the authority of Paul and did not recognize the authority of false teachers. (Acts 19:13-16)

From the Catechism: Key Words to Know

ECONOMY OF SALVATION (DIVINE ECONOMY): From a Greek word (*oikonomia*, literally "management of a household" or "stewardship") which refers to God's Revelation and communication of himself to the world in time for the sake of the salvation of all humanity; hence, the economy of salvation (258, 1066). The Fathers of the Church distinguished *oikonomia* from *theologia*; the latter term refers to the mystery of the internal life of the Trinity (236). The economy of salvation, on the other hand, refers to God's activity in creating and governing the world, particularly with regard to his plan for the salvation of the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a plan which is being accomplished through his Body the Church, in its life and sacraments; hence, the "sacramental economy" (1076, 1093).

DEPOSIT OF FAITH: The heritage of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, handed on in the Church from the time of the apostles, from which the Magisterium draws all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed (84; cf. 1202).

POPE: The successor of St. Peter as Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pontiff of the universal Catholic Church. The Pope exercises a primacy of authority as Vicar of Christ and shepherd of the whole Church; he receives the divine assistance promised by Christ to the Church when he defines infallibly a doctrine of faith or morals (880-882).

BISHOP: One who has received the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which makes him a member of the episcopal college and a successor of the apostles. He is the shepherd of a particular church entrusted to him (1557; cf. 861, 886).

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION: The handing on of apostolic preaching and authority from the apostles to their successors the bishops through the laying on of hands, as a permanent office in the Church (77, 861).

MAGISTERIUM: The living, teaching office of the Church, whose task it is to give an authentic interpretation of the word of God, whether in its written form (Sacred Scripture), or in the form of

Tradition. The Magisterium ensures the Church's fidelity to the teaching of the apostles in matters of faith and morals (85, 890, 2033).

CATHOLIC CHURCH: The Church established by Christ on the foundation of the apostles, possessing the fullness of the means of salvation which he has willed: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession (830).

