

Lecture 4: Divine Revelation

1. The Apostles are Sent out to Teach
 - a. They are given this mission by Christ
 - i. Matthew 28:18-20
 - ii. They are to hand on REVELATION
 1. Revelation: The Truth which God tells us about Himself, about what He has done for us, and about who we are and what we are to do
 2. Three components of Divine Revelation:
 - a. Sacred Tradition
 - b. Sacred Scripture
 - c. Magisterium
2. How do the Apostles hand on Divine Revelation?
 - a. Orally, by preaching (CCC 76)
 - i. They handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received – whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had themselves learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
 - ii. They went out taught and exemplified the truth of God
 - iii. This is Sacred Tradition: the word of God handed down orally by the Apostles and their Successors
3. LATER, some handed on Divine Revelation by Writing
 - a. E.g., St. John, St. Matthew, etc...
 - b. This is Sacred Scripture: the word of God handed down in written form
 - i. Now, most of the Apostles didn't leave behind any writing
 1. For them it was sufficient to preach the good news
 2. Some of the New Testament writers were not Apostles
 - a. E.g., St. Luke and St. Mark got their information from the Apostles
 - ii. So we see that Sacred Scripture **comes after** Sacred Tradition, and **flows out of** Sacred Tradition
 1. E.g., where does the Bible come from? Out of all the many possible books that were floating around, the Pope and Bishops had to decide which books were really the Word of God, and which were not
 2. This wasn't done until 393 at the Council of Hippo
 - iii. Further, even though Scripture is completed within the 1st century, Sacred Tradition continues
 1. Those who come after the Apostles, the “Fathers of the Church” bear witness in their writings to the teachings of the Apostles
 - a. St. Athanasius (+373): “The Lord taught, the Apostles preached; the Fathers have kept”

- b. St. Iranaeus (180 A.D.): “The true knowledge is the teaching of the Apostles... passed down through the succession of bishops in charge of the Church, which has come down to our own time, safeguarded, without... addition or subtraction... avoiding danger and blasphemy”
 - iv. CCC 81: “And Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching.”
 - c. What is the relationship between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition?
 - i. The Full word of God is found in both the teaching of the Apostles handed down in Tradition and is Sacred Scripture
 - ii. There is One divine Well-Spring (source) of God’s Revelation, and that is Christ, which flows down to us in two rivers:
 - 1. Sacred Tradition-the Apostolic Teaching
 - 2. Sacred Scripture-the Bible
 - iii. CCC 97: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God
 - iv. The error of *Sola Scriptura*: Scripture Alone
 - 1. Many think that Scripture is all we need to know the content of our faith
 - 2. But Scripture is not the full word of God.
 - 3. Nowhere does Scripture teach that Scripture alone is sufficient; on the contrary insists on the importance of Tradition!
 - a. 2 Thes 2:15: So then brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us either by word of mouth or by letter
 - b. 2 Thes 3:6: We instruct you, brothers, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to shun any brother who conducts himself in a disorderly way, and not according to the tradition they received from us
 - c. 1 Cor 11:1-2: Maintain the Traditions even as I handed them to you
4. Magisterium – very well, so we have Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. But who decides how they are to be interpreted? What if there are disagreements about what they mean? Who gets the final say?
 - a. And disagreements did happen! Historical examples:
 - i. Council of Jerusalem: Judaizer Conflict: Acts 15:1-11
 - ii. Should non-Jews who became Christians be circumcised, according to the Jewish custom? How could this question be settled? Christ had not explicitly addressed this issue

- iii. So the Apostles convened, and after much debate, Peter, as head of the Apostles, arose and stated that circumcision was not necessary in order to be a follower of Christ
 - 1. The first Pope and the Bishops, who were in union with him resolved the question
 - b. Council of Nicaea: 325 AD: Arian Heresy
 - i. Arius was claiming that Christ was not really God
 - 1. So the Bishops, with a representative from the Pope in Rome, convened
 - a. They stated that Christ was “homoousias” (of the same nature, the same substance, “one in being”) with God
 - i. You are not going to find the word “homoousias” in Sacred Scripture – this is a development of what is contained in Scripture implicitly
 - c. Now, the majority of bishops and Christians were actually on the wrong side of this argument: they were Arians
 - i. But the Pope and the Bishops in union with him held strong
 - ii. If we were just going to side with whoever had more votes, (instead of following the successor of Peter and those bishops loyal to him) we wouldn’t believe that Jesus was really God
 - d. *Humanae Vitae*, 1968
 - i. The question of artificial means of birth-control
 - 1. Of course, condoms didn’t exist in the time of Our Lord, so there’s no mention of contraceptives in Scripture
 - 2. Paul VI, the Pope, states that contraception is immoral, and cannot be used
 - a. Many faithful bishops and Christians accepted the Pope’s teaching
 - b. But just like in the case of Arianism, most Christians disagreed with the Pope
 - e. So what happened in all these cases? The Pope and the Bishops in union with him interpret the truth about Revelation
 - i. This is the **Magisterium**: The Pope and Bishops in union with him: Guard, Servant, and Interpreter of the Word of God
 - ii. CCC 100: The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and the bishops in communion with him.
 - f. What is the Scope of the Magisterium’s Authority?
 - i. Faith and Morals
 - 1. Faith: The truth about God and what He has done for us
 - 2. Morals: The truth about what we must do in order to share in His life, His love, and the happiness he intends for us
5. How does the Magisterium make its teaching known?
 - a. Many different ways

- i. Catechism
 - ii. Ecumenical Councils (Vat. II, Trent, Nicaea, Jerusalem)
 - iii. Papal Teaching
 - 1. Ordinary: Encyclicals, Wednesday Audiences, etc...
 - 2. Extraordinary: *ex cathedra statements*
 - a. Only happened twice: Immaculate Conception (1854) and Assumption (1950)
6. Papal Infallibility
- a. **Infallibility** is that Christ will not allow the Pope or the Pope and the Bishops in union with him to teach error when they are teaching officially on what Christ revealed to us about faith and morals
 - i. Does not possess infallibility on his own – he participates in the infallibility of Christ (CCC 889)
 - ii. He must be teaching officially, as Pope
 - iii. And he must be speaking about a matter of faith and morals
 - b. Infallibility (can't make an error) vs. Impeccability (can't sin)
 - i. Jesus did not promise Peter that he would keep him from sinning
 - ii. But the Popes have never erred in their official teaching
 - 1. Story of Pope Sixtus V
 - a. Was preparing to officially sanction an erroneous text, and suddenly died
 - iii. Lumen Gentium 25: We must give a loyal submission of intellect and will “to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*”
7. The Unchangeability of Magisterial Pronouncements
- a. Doctrine vs. Discipline
 - i. Doctrine: the Truths of Revelation, interpreted by the Magisterium
 - 1. These can develop, (we can understand more about them), but they will never change
 - 2. For example, abortion will never be morally permissible
 - 3. Women will never be priests
 - 4. Our Lady will always be Immaculately Conceived
 - ii. Discipline: the practical, pastoral laws of the Church
 - 1. These can change, depending on the time, situation, and the judgment of the Church authorities
 - a. For example, what color vestments the priest wears during lent
 - b. In what language we say the mass
 - 2. Now, although they can change, we should still follow the rules as they are laid down by the Pope and Bishops
 - a. For Christ gave them the power, not only to teach, but also to govern, and so we should respect their authority

Recommended Reading:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, ##50-140

Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II)