

An Interview With God: Scripture and Tradition

DOCTRINAL ELEMENT

Church

TOPIC

Tradition and Scripture

GOAL

The goal for this session is to explain the purpose and ongoing relevance of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as the means of transmitting Divine Revelation (God revealing himself to us).

SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES

(II.II.A.3.d)

SCRIPTURE

Tradition: 1 Jn 1:2-3; Jn 20:22-23; Mt 16:18–19; Jn 16:13; Jn 21:25; 2 Tim 2:2; 2 Thes 2:14–15

Scripture: Jn 16:13; Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 3:15-16; Lk 24:45; Heb 1:1-3; Phil 3:18

CATECHISM

Transmission of Divine Revelation: 74-79, 81-82, 101-104

Deposit of Faith: 80, 97

Apostolic Tradition: 75-76, 81, 83, 96, 120 traditions: 83

Scripture: 101-108, 134-137

Magisterium: 85-90, 100

Revelation: 51-67

GOLDEN THREADS

The Church: The apostolic or lived experience of Jesus (Apostolic Tradition) is passed on and lived in the faith, worship and community experience of the Church, on pilgrimage through time. As the Body of Christ, the Church is the living image of the community of persons that is the Trinity.

The Paschal Mystery: Christ, in whom the entire Revelation of God is summed up, culminates in the Paschal mystery. The same Christ, the fullness of truth, commanded the apostles to preach what was revealed and taught to them. This teaching, the Gospel, is passed on through both Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE

Built on Christ. Christ is the fullness of all Revelation both in the Old and New Testaments. We believe that the Church's Traditions and Scripture were prompted by the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of Jesus by his Apostles. Scripture and Tradition are inherently *Built on Christ* since they communicate to us the life, death and resurrection of Christ himself.

PROCLAMATION

“Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the Most High God is summed up, commanded the Apostles to preach the Gospel...and communicate the gifts of God to all men (Dei Verbum, 7).”

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Revelation – God has revealed himself to us (humanity) through time (CCC 69). The Israelite people were God’s chosen means of revealing himself and his plan of salvation (CCC 71-72). The culmination or fullness of this Revelation and plan of salvation is Jesus (CCC 65, 73).

Transmission of Revelation – Through the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the example and teaching of Jesus, the Apostles have continued the mission they were entrusted: specifically, to spread the Gospel to all nations (CCC 74). Revelation has been passed on or transmitted to us in two ways, through Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture, both are to be honored and accepted with equal reverence and devotion (DV 9). This is because Scripture and Tradition come from one source (Jesus Christ) and are bound closely together and communicate one with the other.

Apostolic Tradition – Tradition in this sense is what was learned or passed on to the apostles directly from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles (CCC 81). History and the Catechism show us that the early Church did not have a written New Testament; as such, the Gospel (or Good News) was passed on orally and by example. The Catechism goes on to explain that The New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition (CCC 83).

Scripture – “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God put down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (DV 9)” through human authors. As one of the modes of transmission of Revelation, both the Old Testament and New Testament together are the written record of God’s Revelation through history. In the sacred books, God comes to meet his children and, in their language, talks with them (DV 21). The Gospels, specifically, are the heart of the Scriptures, because they are the narrative of the life of Jesus (CCC 124).

tradition – These are the local traditions that have been adopted to express the greater Traditions of the Church. These traditions, in light of Apostolic Tradition, can be retained or modified under the guidance of the Magisterium (CCC 83).

Magisterium – The Magisterium is the living, teaching office of the Church in whom the interpretation of Tradition and Scripture is entrusted. This means that the bishops, in union with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, are entrusted with the same mission as the apostles. The Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God (Tradition and Scripture), they are its servants. Meaning that they cannot add to Revelation, they teach and help us to interpret what has been handed on to them, in the name of Jesus Christ. (CCC 84-88)

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Websites

- Bill Cosby and the “Noah” skit. God speaks to Noah and tells him to build an arc. Ask yourself how do you respond when God speaks to you?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bputeFGXEjA>
- In a 10 minute podcast, Dr. Mark Miravalle explains the basis of Scripture and Tradition in the Catholic Church in the context of Marian Traditions:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/franciscanfriars#p/search/2/gp6Fjzlsugs>

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- A two minute summary of Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NEdWnjvqHw>
- This video gives a 10 minute history of the Early Church from around 33 AD to 100 AD, it is a very good summary of the transmission of Traditions and Gospel:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLNRWB9m590>
- This is the second installment of the history of Christianity, including early Bishops and Apologists:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIYHIGpsLyU>
- Solemnity of Pentecost at the Pantheon; rose petals are dropped from the open oculus at twelve o'clock noon in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. As the petals falls, the choir chants the sequence Veni Sancte Spiritus!
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LRw6xbfFPo&feature=player_embedded

OTHER RESOURCES

- *Dei Verbum – Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, November 18, 1965, Pope Paul VI
- Quotes:
 - *“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 Thes. 2:15)
 - *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 3:14–15)

GATHER

Environment ideas:

Icebreaker: *Tinkertoy Communication*

[This icebreaker can be longer if you want to use it as the basis for discussion later in the night.]

The object of this ice-breaker is to illustrate how ideas or instructions can be transmit through the spoken word and the necessity of multiple people working together to transmit the whole and complete concept.

Materials: multiple tinkertoy sets with the exact same pieces in each.

Begin by building a tinkertoy structure out of one of the sets. You can make it as difficult or as easy as you would like. DO NOT let any of the participants in the ice-breaker see it before hand. Have the sculpture covered in another room directly off of the room that you are doing the ice-breaker in. Have the teens gather into small groups and explain the rest of the ice-breaker.

1. One person is chosen from the group to go in and look at the sculpture for as long as they want.

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2. They then come back and describe (DO NOT TOUCH) to the rest of the group how to build the structure.
3. When they cannot tell the group any more the next person goes in and looks at the structure. This repeats for the length of time allowed. (Usually 15 min for relatively simple structures or 30 min for more difficult).
4. The group with the most accurate or a completed structure at the end wins a prize.

Opening Prayer

Read one or both of the scriptures and prayers below:

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you (1 Cor 11:1-2).”

Lord God, you have given us a perfect example to imitate in Christ. Help us to imitate the example of your saints so that we, like them, may be with you for all eternity.

“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 Thes 2:15).”

Jesus, the fullness of all revelation, has taught us by word and example all that we need to know for salvation through his apostles. Lord, help us to hear your teaching with open hearts and minds; that we may learn from those who learned directly from you.

EXPLANATION

O.K., I have some really difficult questions for all of you to answer...to yourself, please. How did you learn to use the bathroom? How did you learn to tie your shoes... do you remember the bunny ears? How did you learn to talk or read or add?

Are all of these things just infused knowledge? No, somebody taught you, right.

These are just a few examples of some basic things that I am sure somebody had to teach you. They had to tell you or show you, right. But how did they learn so they could teach you? The answer is very simple...somebody showed or taught them. The same is true with our knowledge of God.

God taught us about himself through the Word of God, and I don't mean just the written word. I mean Jesus, as the Word made flesh, is the fullness of God's Revelation. *What does that mean?* It means that everything that we ever wanted to know about God is contained in Jesus' life and person. So, how do we learn about God through Jesus?

Simple, Jesus taught his apostles about himself and his Father through words and by example and they passed on that knowledge to us, but how? Go back to what I said earlier. Think about how you learned everything you know. You either learned it from somebody, experienced it or you read about it from a reliable source, right? This is the way we learn. The same is true in the Church.

Sacred Tradition is the living knowledge of God that has been passed on from person to person from the apostles to us. The reliable source is the Magisterium. The New Testament of the Bible is the written record, from reliable sources, of Jesus' life and teachings. So let's take a look at Tradition and Scripture, the modes of transmitting to others what we know about God, a little more closely.

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Apostolic Tradition

When we, the Church, talk about Tradition with a capital T we are referring to Apostolic Tradition, which is what was learned or passed to the apostles directly from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Tradition transmits, in its entirety, the Word of God which was entrusted to the apostles. I know; that sounds like a lot of information and it is.

Think about this for a minute. If I asked you to tell me who you are, everything about you and what makes you, you. Could you do it? Could you right it all down? You would probably have to tell stories about your past for me to understand, right? Even then, I would have to spend time with you and get to know you to understand, really, who you are. What you like, what your values are, what kind of food you like to eat, how you celebrate the holidays, where you come from and more... Even then, I bet I wouldn't know everything. But if you had a lot of people (your friends and family) do the same thing we might collectively know who you are better because we would all see something slightly different. We would see all of the different things that make you who you are. The same is true with Jesus. The people who knew Him best, the apostles, tell us about Him through the Traditions of the Church.

For example, the Tradition of honoring Mary as the Mother of God and praying for her intercession. Why do we do this? What does this tell us about God?
(Get responses from the teens. If you have to, dig a little deeper to help them understand how these traditions point to God.)

It tells us that Jesus, the Son of God was truly man; he followed the law and respected his Mother, Mary. What else does this statement tell us?

Sacred Scripture

What about Scripture? Where did it come from and what does it tell us? First of all let's look at what we mean by Scripture. What is Scripture?

(Gather some answers from the teens...what do they think the Scriptures are? What do they think of the Bible and the stories it tells? Is it just a book about Jesus? Is it a book of history?)

The Church tells us that Sacred Scripture is, "the speech of God put down in writing, by human authors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Okay, so *what* does *that* mean? Remember that Scripture is more than just the New Testament. What *we* call the Old Testament is a collection of writings from before the time of Jesus that tell us about God and his plan for our salvation. Remember sin, that thing that separated us from him? The entire Old Testament is the historical record of God's plan to repair the damage that was caused by Original Sin. This plan was not revealed in one instant, like an "*All you need to know about God*" book that fell from the sky. It was revealed through time. The Old Testament, then, is the history of salvation that points to Jesus as the Messiah.

So what is the New Testament then? The New Testament, briefly, is a collection of writings *inspired by the Holy Spirit* that record Jesus' life (the Gospels) and help the early church communities understand the Traditions that the apostles taught them. So where did these writings come from and who the heck are Mark and Luke?

Okay, first, where did these writings come from? Remember our discussion about Tradition. The apostles learned from Jesus and passed that on to others. Who were the others that they

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passed their knowledge of Jesus onto? (*Wait for an answer, help them find an answer if necessary.*)

Right, these were the first bishops. The apostles knew that they would have to teach what they had learned and prepare others to take their place. Just as Jesus had commissioned the apostles to go out and spread the “Good News,” the apostles commissioned others to take their place as well. (Notice that Jesus commissioned or gave authority to the twelve apostles, not to all of the disciples.) This is the beginning of the Magisterium of the Church (The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church. They are entrusted with the proper interpretation of Tradition and Scripture). Those who studied under the apostles became bishops who passed the Traditions they learned onto their successors clear to the current bishops of the Church.

[Fun Fact: Every Roman Catholic bishop can trace his commission back to St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome.]

That’s great, but it still doesn’t answer the question of where the New Testament writings came from. Be patient, I’m getting there...

Remember that communication was not as easy as it is now. Christianity was spreading very fast across the known world. Paul traveled from Jerusalem through Greece and to Rome three separate times establishing Churches (communities) in different cities as he went. Jerusalem and Rome are thousands of miles apart and it took weeks to make the journey. You couldn’t just text or email a reply to a Church in Corinth if they had a question; you had to write a letter. These churches were relying on the authority of Paul (the Bishop) to answer questions of Traditions and Jesus’ example. The earliest writings that we have are the Letters of Paul to the various Church communities he founded.

As time passed the remaining apostles and the first bishops were realizing that the twelve apostles were being martyred or dying. They needed to record the firsthand experience to preserve as close as possible what they learned from The Source of Revelation, Jesus. So the Gospel’s were written from the teachings of the Twelve Apostles. The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the teachings of Matthew the Apostle, Mark, the disciple of Peter; Luke, the disciple of Paul; and John the Apostle.

The Gospels then are accounts of Jesus’ life, inspired by the Holy Spirit, written by the people who had either experienced Christ directly or were a very few years removed from the experience and were students of the apostles. This is why Tradition and Scripture work hand in hand and should be honored on equal level. One is the lived experience of Jesus passed on through the bishops the other is the written narrative of the apostles experience of Jesus and the experience of the early church.

Why not just write it all down? Well, it goes back to really knowing something, like you. It takes a lot of perspectives to understand something living completely. Luke tells us that there were many more things that Jesus said and did, but it would take more books than the world could contain. So Scripture and Tradition have to work together to give us a more complete picture.

Wow, that was a lot of information to throw at you. So let’s summarize what we have looked at tonight.

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What is Revelation? *God revealing Himself and His plan of salvation to us.*

What are the two ways we learn about God? *Sacred Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, and Apostolic Tradition.*

What is Apostolic Tradition? *The lived experience of Jesus passed on from the Apostles through the Magisterium of the Church.*

Why is Sacred Scripture important? *Scripture is the speech of God put down in writing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the written record of the Word of God. The OT points to Jesus; the NT is the record of Jesus' life and the actions of the Holy Spirit. All of the Scriptures work together with Tradition to help us understand the full Revelation of God.*

Where did the New Testament come from? *The NT are writings inspired by the Holy Spirit written by the Apostles or those who knew them recording the first hand experience of Jesus and the early Church.*

Summary

Everything that God wishes to reveal about himself is contained and fulfilled in the life and person of Jesus. Tradition and Scripture transmit or pass on that Revelation to us through the Church. In other words, through the lived experience of the apostles and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we have received all that God wished to teach us about himself. It is the combination of Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture that give us the body of Revelation. The Magisterium, or the bishops, through the Holy Spirit and the Bishop of Rome, has been entrusted with the responsibility of correctly interpreting that body of Revelation. This responsibility and the knowledge necessary to correctly interpret Tradition and Scripture have been passed on from the apostles to the bishops in an unbroken line of succession.

[Fun Fact: The 73 books in the Catholic Bible, especially the 27 books of the NT were compiled from a larger body of writings. Tradition and the Magisterium decided which books were to be included in the final canon of the Bible.]

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: Understanding God through Art

Choose a variety of classical and modern pieces of art like the ones listed in Appendix A. The idea behind this activity is that the teens see how Tradition and traditions inform our perspective of artwork and faith, especially when the two come together.

Begin with a few of these images enlarged and on tri-pods (DO NOT show the names of the artwork) around the room or have them put together into a presentation so they can be projected on the wall and discussed in small groups. Either way, the key is to have a discussion on the various works and how they relate to Tradition and Scripture.

Suggested questions to ask for each piece of artwork:

What do you see in this picture?

What would you title it?

Who or what is the subject of the picture?

Do you see anything that looks like a story from the Bible?

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Can you think of a Tradition that this conveys?
What emotions do you see?
Could you show that emotion in writing? How?
Add other questions to fit particular pieces.

Activity Option # 2: Group Story on a Common experience – “Tell a Story”

The purpose of this activity is to discuss common traditions and events that surround traditions. The idea is that we build events around traditions so that they are easy to pass on. The important thing here is that traditions support an important event or a reason for the event rather than just tradition for traditions sake. The other idea is how traditions are passed on in families through generations.

Break into small groups between 4-6 youth in each with an adult to moderate.
Assign each group a common event for them to discuss and write about. (Events can be: birthday party, Christmas celebrations, Thanksgiving, family vacations, shopping or going to a concert, etc.)

The discussion needs to be directed by questions and talking about how the celebration or event happens for *each* of the people in the small group. Similar to brain storming: there are no wrong answers.

What are the external trappings, decorations, themes, etc?
Who is invited or asked to join in?
Where does the event take place?
What kind of food do you eat?
How did you learn to celebrate like this?
What is the purpose of the event?
What are some other things about this event that we haven't talked about yet?

Put together a common short story of the event that you talked about. Use bits and pieces of the brainstorming that everybody contributed to write the story.

Now that you have brainstormed and written a common short story talk about (in the small groups) the following questions:

Do we all celebrate these events the same way? Why or why not?
What are some of the common things that we experience even if the external elements are different?
How important are the external elements to the tradition or event?
Why do we do these events or have these celebrations? (*What is the underlying reason?*)
What is the main reason for the event that you discussed? Were those reasons maintained even if the event was celebrated differently? Why?
Is the tradition in the reason for the event or in the way the event is celebrated?

SEND

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?

Jesus is the fullness of Revelation. In other words, everything that God wishes to reveal about Himself is contained and fulfilled in the life and person of Jesus. Tradition and Scripture transmit or pass on that Revelation to us through the Church. It is the combination of Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture that give us an accurate picture of God Revealed.

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Closing Prayer

A Prayer to Know You

St. Benedict of Nursia ca. 480-547

Gracious and Holy Father,
Please give me:
intellect to understand you,
reason to discern you,
diligence to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
a spirit to know you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
ears to hear you,
eyes to see you,
a tongue to proclaim you,
a way of life pleasing to you,
patience to wait for you
and perseverance to look for you.

Grant me a perfect end,
your holy presence,
a blessed resurrection
and life everlasting.

Amen.

Biography

Terry Simons is the Assistant WorkCamp Coordinator for the Diocese of Arlington. He is originally from Boise, Idaho and loves a variety of outdoor activities including golf, hiking and rock climbing. He is a graduate of Franciscan University of Steubenville and has been working in Youth and Campus Ministry since 1991.

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Appendix A

Adoration of the Shepherds by Antonia Balestra - <http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Adoration-of-the-Shepherds-Balestra1.jpg>

The Nativity (Holy Night – The Birth of Jesus) by unknown- http://www.kazuya-akimoto.com/2007/2007images/IMG_6243_nativity_450.jpg

Prodigal Son by Oleg Korolev - http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_KqFjEBc-Xb4/Swe0TFYxryI/AAAAAAAAADRQ/aBwEpuA6ly4/s1600/Prodigal_Son_Oil,Canvas_130cmX90cm_2005.jpg

Virgin Mary with the Infant by T. Vartanova (Byzantine) - <http://www.huntfor.com/artoriginals/Vartanova/Images/vartanova2.jpg>

The Three Archangels with Tobias by Francesco Botticini - <http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/thumbnail/86586/1/The-Three-Archangels-With-Tobias-C.-1470.jpg>

Archangels by Unknown - <http://fineartamerica.com/images-medium/two-angels-peter-shor.jpg>

Return of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt - <http://img.allposters.com/6/LRG/21/2190/U2GAD00Z.jpg>

Heartbreak in the Garden by unknown - http://www.theartisans.us/images/fullsizeimages/12-heartbreak_in_garden.jpg

Fall of Man and the Expulsion from the Garden by Michelangelo - <http://www.lib-art.com/imgpainting/5/1/19315-the-fall-and-expulsion-from-garden-michelangelo-buonarroti.jpg>

Other Artwork, both secular and religious can be found at:

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. – <http://www.nga.gov/>

The Louvre, Paris, France – <http://www.louvre.fr/llv/commun/home.jsp?bmLocale=en>

Musée D’Orsay, Paris, France – <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/home.html>