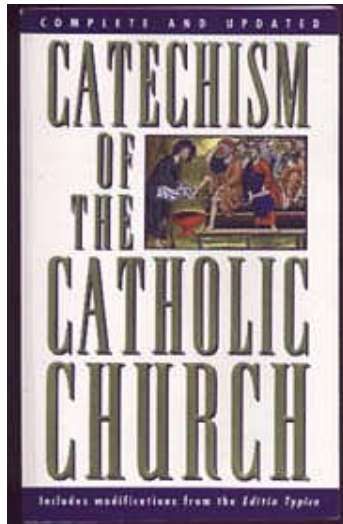


Theology for Beginners – Scriptures and Tradition

Overview

Very often we hear of conflicts in the source of our Catholic Faith. Most of our Protestant brothers and sisters base their beliefs entirely upon what they find in the bible. Catholics look to both Scriptures and Tradition as the source of our faith.



What is Tradition?

God's revelation comes to us through the words spoken (Tradition) and written (Scriptures) by human beings. Together, Tradition and Scripture comprises the sacred deposit of our faith as the Word of God.

There are actually two types of tradition as it affects our faith. There are those Traditions – with a capital “T” – that can never change. Examples of these are the Eucharist and the Holy Trinity.

There are other traditions – with a small “t” – that may change for various reasons over time. Typically these traditions are not critical in the faith in that any changes do not contradict the fundamental beliefs. An example of a tradition is the ban on eating of meat on Fridays. This was an old tradition that was made optional following Vatican II. Optional meant that the faithful were encouraged to continue this type of fasting – but that it was not considered to be mandatory nor sinful if we consumed meat on a Friday.

Sources of our Faith

Sacred Scripture is the Word of God as written under the inspiration (breath) of the Holy Spirit [CCC # 81]. Sacred Tradition [CCC # 78] is the

handing down of God's Word through the unbroken successors of the Apostles. Together they make up the total of sacred deposit of the Word of God – entrusted to our church.

Why do we include Scripture and Tradition as a subject of Theology? Because through these sacred paths flows all of what we avow to believe in and the true source of all Theological ideals. Without Sacred Scripture or Tradition, Theology is but mere words.

The heritage of the faith is entrusted to the whole of the church [CCC # 84-86]. We call this the “Magisterium of the Church”. It means that the task of interpretation is entrusted to the bishops while in communion with the successor of Peter – the Bishop of Rome.

CCC # 109-114 identifies three criteria for the interpretation of scripture in accordance with the Spirit who identified it. These are briefly outlined as follows:

1. Be especially attentive to the content and the unity of the whole of scripture. While there may be seemingly different books, they all eventually flow together.
2. Read the scripture within the living Tradition of the whole of the church. That is, scripture is written in the churches heart rather than in just documents and records.
3. Be attentive to the analogy of the spirit. This means the coherence of truths among themselves and with the whole plan of Revelation.

Note: **CCCX** refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs. For more information on this subject see paragraphs 668-682