



Fanning The Flame

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Father Robert Zwilling, Pastor St. Theresa of Avila, Salem; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Kinmundy

Chapter 3: Proclaim the Gospel to Every Creature (Mark 16:15)

Nugget

Ah! in spite of my littleness, I would like to enlighten souls as did the Prophets and the Doctors. I have the vocation of the Apostle. I would like to travel over the whole earth to preach Your Name and to plant Your glorious Cross on infidel soil. But O my Beloved, one mission alone would not be sufficient for me, I would want to preach the Gospel on all the five continents simultaneously and even to the most remote isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only but from the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages.

*St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face,
(of Lisieux)*

Quick Reflection

When I was growing up, and especially as I revealed to others that I was considering becoming a priest, I was once asked, "How do you know what you believe? How do you know that it is trustworthy?" Well, unable to answer this fully myself, I went to my father as I often did in matters of faith and life. Part of his answer was that we were Catholic and this is what we believe and live as one might expect him to respond, but it also went deeper. He wanted to know what the person seemed to be asking me. He explained that there was the constant history and witness of our Faith over the last 2000 years. And he said that both God and men testify to the same Truth. Finally, he stated that is just makes sense, from which I took that the Faith was reasonable and did not contradict our reflected experience.

Indeed, this is a very good question to Roman Catholics, how do we know what we believe? And how can we be sure that we can trust it. Let us take a closer look.

Commentary

Simply put, God's Revelation of Himself to us is the source of our Faith, Prayer, and Practice. We can study

that which is around us and see that something like "God" might or must exist, but it would tell us only limited things about God. When God reveals Himself, we get the whole scoop.

God fully revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, who has made known to us that God is ONE in THREE Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From Jesus Christ, the One Word of God, Divine Revelation about God has two expressions: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

Sacred Scripture is easy to identify because it is contained in the 44 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament coming together in the Holy Bible. Assembled from the first centuries of the Church, God inspired Sacred Scripture by acting in and through human authors (p. 27). God is the primary author of Sacred Scripture, and human beings are the secondary authors.

Sacred Tradition takes a bit more for us to perceive and receive. Jesus Christ did not write a book, He preached a Gospel. And He sent His apostles out to, "proclaim the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)." So this is a non-written expression of Divine Revelation. Sacred Tradition is the living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church (p. 25).

Hold fast to the traditions you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

-St. Paul to the Thessalonians; 2 Thes. 2:15

Who transmits this living message you may ask? Well that is the final part of Divine Revelation. We now have two expression of the Divine Revelation (Bible and Tradition), but who can tell us what they mean. For example, there are 30,000 Christian groups that say they believe and practice by the Holy Bible alone,

and yet the Holy Bible does not say that it is the only expression of Revelation. Thus, Jesus gave us the Magisterium.

Definition: *MAGISTERIUM* (from Latin *magister* – “teacher”) – *The teaching office of the pope, and bishops in communion with him, guided by the Holy Spirit. The pope and bishops are the authoritative teachers in the Church. (p. 519 United States Catholic Catechism for Adults)*

Finally, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition do not stand alone. The Magisterium has the authority from Jesus Christ to guard and interpret them to Catholic Christians in each age so that we may know about God, how to have communion with Him, and how we are to cooperate with the whole of creation.

Again, the question might further be asked how can we trust a group of human men to guard and interpret Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition? Well outside the promise of Jesus to always remain with His Church (Matthew 28:20) and the protection of the Holy Spirit (John 15:7-13), we know that the Magisterium cannot contradict Sacred Scripture or Sacred Tradition or teach something that is not therein contained. And the Pope and Bishops, successors of the Apostles, have taught the same thing in every age, one can verify this by reading books from different centuries. Thus, the Pope cannot contradict previous Popes. Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium depend on each other just as it takes three legs for a stool to stand and function as a chair.



"he who receives you, receives Me, and he who rejects you, rejects Me and the One who sent Me." -Matt. 10:1,40; Luke 10:6; John 13:20

"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." -Matt. 16:19

The oral preaching of the Apostles (Tradition) and the written message of salvation under the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit (Bible) are conserved and handed on as the Deposit of the Faith through the Apostolic Succession (Magisterium) in the Church. Both the living Tradition and the written Scriptures have their common source in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. (p. 25 United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.)

Discussion Questions

1. What are you certain about in life? How do you know this for certain? Why are you certain? If you are not certain about anything, do you think God would want us to be this way?
2. Do I trust God? Do I trust the way He has chosen to reveal Himself and pass that on? Have I tried to trust God? Have I tried to trust others?
3. How has God proclaimed Himself to me or others? Have I looked for this proclamation? Did I respond to this proclamation? If so, how might I respond better and proclaim it myself? If not, how might I respond and proclaim it in my life? How can I proclaim the Gospel to each person God puts me in contact with?

A Prayer

When I found your words, I devoured them; and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, because I bear your name, LORD, God of hosts.
Jeremiah 15:16 ... Amen.

About the Author

Father Robert Zwilling grew up on a grain and livestock farm 12 miles northeast of Olney. The youngest of 11 children, he started thinking about the priesthood in eighth grade after his father told him he thought he would make a good priest. Before serving where he is now, he served at St. Mary in Mount Vernon, St. Michael the Archangel in Radom, and St. Barbara in Scheller.

May God bless you this week!