

Why I Am Catholic

Tradition

Christ still speaks through His Church as we understand the bible more clearly and apply its teachings to new issues. This we call Tradition.

The Father's self-communication made through his word in the Holy Spirit remains present and active in the Church. "God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the spouse of the beloved Son. And the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the church and through her in the world leads believers to the full truth." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 79*)

We are not speaking of a new public revelation. New questions and new issues open us up to a new and deeper understanding of what God has already said. Tradition speaks of our learning and application, guided by the same Spirit has worked with the church over the last 2,000 years to answer the questions and address the problems and spiritual dilemmas of each generation.

"Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries." (66) Tradition was evident during the time of the Apostles.

"The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living tradition." (83) This was handed on as "the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'" (77) (St. Irenaeus, early 2nd century)

The Scriptures remind us that Christ Himself gave this authority to the Apostles and the Church. "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church...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." (Mt 16: 18:19)

"That, in receiving the word of god from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of god, which is now at work in you who believer." (1 Thess 2:13) "We had been eye witnesses of his majesty...we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable...Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture, that is a matter of personal interpretation, for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the Holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God." (II Peter 1:16, 19, 20-21)

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"This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred scripture, though closely connected to it...'The sayings of the Holy Fathers are a witness to the life giving presence of this Tradition.'" (78)

We believe "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit." (81) We also believe that [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, expand, and spread it abroad by their preaching." (81)

We further believe that "the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, 'does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.'" (82)

Footnote

Direct and indirect references to the antichrist and antichrists are made in several New Testament books. In the First Letter of John, we are told 'many antichrists have appeared' and that "they went out from us." (I John 2:18-19) And "whoever denies the father and the son, this is the antichrist." (v.22)

In John's Second Letter, we again read: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh; such is the deceitful one and the antichrist. (II John 7) Revelation implies both the singular and multiple-one and many. We are called to know our faith and to guard against false teaching.