



BURLINGTON•LYONS

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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Dei Verbum Comments

6 August 2025

Preface

1. *Hear* then *proclaim*

Hearing → believing (faith) → hope → love

Chapter I: Revelation Itself

2. Creatures by nature, children by grace

Deeds and words that have inner unity. The deeds confirm the teachings of the words; words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mysteries. This phrasing should make us think of the **Sacraments**.

Sacrament:

- a sign that does what it signifies
- an efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ entrusted to the Church to dispense divine life

3. Creation itself is part of revelation. Creation is enough. But “[God] went further.”

- First parents → Abraham → Patriarchs → Moses → Prophets
- This is the line of Old Testament covenants, or Salvation History
- Covenant = expansion of God’s family
- Eucharistic Prayer IV: “Time and again you offered them covenants, and through the prophets, taught them to look forward to salvation.”

4. New and Eternal Covenant

Jesus completes the work of salvation.

Therefore, there is no further *public* revelation.

Different than private revelation. Private does not mean secret. We can still encounter God in apparitions, suffering, the poor, etc.

5. This paragraph makes a point to address the “act of faith,” which grace “precedes and assists.” This is the nature-grace-free will debate that has appeared many times in history. The footnote references the Second Council of Orange, which was in AD 529. A debate almost 1500 years old!

6. Canonical scripture has teaching authority.



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Chapter II: Handing on Divine Revelation

7. After talking about revelation itself, we now move to how revelation is *handed on*. “Handing on” comes from the Latin word, *traditio*, and one who does the handing on is called a *traditor*. This paragraph talks how the “handing on” of the “full revelation” began with the words from Jesus’s lips, and the “oral preaching” of the Apostles (Matthew, James, Peter, etc.) and “apostolic men” (Luke, Jude, Timothy, etc.).

After that first generation, the “Apostles left bishops” as their successors. Reference is made here to St. Irenaeus, who was a student of St. Polycarp, a student of St. John. College professors trace what is called their “academic pedigree,” meaning the professors they studied for their PhD under. Bishops can track their “apostolic pedigree” or what we teach as the Apostolic Succession.

Referencing St. Irenaeus, in addition to Vatican I and the Council of Trent, reflects a method used at Vatican II called *ressourcement*, or “back to the sources,” to show the continuity of Catholicism from the very beginning of the Christian era.

8. Mention is made to the traditions received both by **word of mouth** or by **letter** (2 Thess 2:15). Two pillars of revelation: **Tradition** and **Scripture**.

The word “develop” should make us think of St. John Henry Newman and his *Development of Doctrine*, the way we talk about the development of how we talk about the faith over the centuries. Catholicism is not a mere philosophical system, but a relationship as the bride of Christ.

No Scripture without Tradition.

9. Because Jesus is the Word, and we as Christians believe both in written word and spoken word, there can no division between our authentic Tradition and our inspired Scriptures.

“It is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.”

10. *Dei Verbum* specifically directs us to the Greek text and the word *koinonia* (Latin *communicatio*, English *common life* or *communion*). There are various local Catholic movements and retreats named after this word, reflecting the necessity of the community of faith. Not only for the sake of prayer and worship, but for the safeguarding of the “deposit of faith.”

Authentic interpretation is “entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church.”

Three legged school of Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church (the magisterium).

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Chapter III: Sacred Scripture, its Divine Inspiration and Interpretation

11. Inspiration of the Holy Spirit: work of the good Spirit makes use of the authors' humanity, including their personality, family, culture, stories, and world events. Theology of inspiration is important because the work of the good spirit preserves the author's human capabilities. Scriptural authors were inspired, not possessed.

In the technical use in spiritual warfare, "spir" words denote the good Spirit (inspiration, expiration) and "sess" words indicate demonic activity (*obsessed, possessed, infested*). We remember in Genesis 2, God breathed into Adam's nostrils to give him life (*inspired* him). And on the Cross, Jesus breathed out the Spirit, or *expired*.

Even the word *conspire* had a good or at least neutral usage at one point in time: "to breathe together," and contribute jointly to a certain result.

12. "God speaks . . . through men *in human fashion*"

To help understand the intent, helps to pay attention to "literary forms," which include historical accounts, prophecy, poems, and more. St. Paul in his letters, for example, writes to a variety of audiences with a variety of styles, and this all needs to be taken into account: teaching, diatribe, scolding, encouraging, etc.

In addition to the "literary forms," of particular texts, also need to balance "the content and unity of the whole of Scripture." We remember, the bible is a collection of books written over thousands of years—Moses to St. John spans ~1400 years (~1300BC to ~AD100).

In our understanding of Revelation, God entered time and let his mysteries unfold with the centuries, in the three-legged stool of Tradition, Scripture, and the teaching office of the Church. Hence, "the judgment of the Church [matures]" according to the "living tradition."

In our own lives, we can think about individual events or stores, or we can piece together the stories of our lives on a bigger scale. Often times, making sense of the big story of our life or our family only comes to its fullness (i.e., makes sense) after many years.

13. Condescension of God—Greek *synkatabasis*

- *syn* = together (think of "symphony")
- *kata* = according (think of a "catalog")
- *basis* = down

Perhaps in the way we talk, "stooping down" or "accommodates" might be translations with less negative connotation: e.g., God "stoops down" to talk to us at our level.

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Chapter IV: The Old Testament

14. God “chose for Himself a people” to begin revealing himself. The first covenants, or expansions of God’s family, came through the Chosen People: Abraham, Moses, and Israel.

15. Purpose of these old covenants (covenant = testament) was to “prepare for the coming of Christ.” Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus as the fulfillment. This is the “overarching story” we believe the Old Testament is telling. Different than the Jewish overarching story, which still awaits the Messiah; hence the term, Hebrew Scriptures.

16. The New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is made manifest in the New (St. Augustine).

Chapter V: The New Testament

17. Death, resurrection, Ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)
Reveal, preach, stir up, gather

18. “Gospels have a special preeminence”

19. Gospels are a fourfold portrait. Each author *selected, reduced, and explained* according to the “situation of their churches.”

20. Apostolic writing, “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit”

Chapter VI: Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

21. “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord.”

All preaching “must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture.” The homily is a continuation of the gospel.

22. “Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful.” Such translations can be “produced in cooperation with the separated brethren.” This paved the way for versions like the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE).

23. Deeper understanding of the Scriptures can be fed through study of the Church Fathers and the “sacred liturgies.” Mention is made not just of Roman rituals, but East and West.

24. “Study of the sacred page is . . . the soul of sacred theology.” Liturgical homily holds foremost place, encompassing pastoral preaching, catechetics, and Christian instruction (morality).

25. Specific statements to (1) the clergy and to (2) the Christian faithful

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (St. Jerome)

Liturgy, devotional reading, other aids

“Prayer should accompany the reading,” prayer which is “a surge (*élan*) of the heart; a simple look turned toward heaven, a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy” (CCC 2558, St. Therese of Lisieux).

Bishops have special responsibility, as inheritors of the Apostolic Succession, to see to instruction of the faithful, especially of the Gospels, such that “the children of the Church may safely and profitably become conversant with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit.”

Production of editions “with suitable footnotes.”

26. Twofold growth in the life of the Church—celebration of the Mass and reverence for the word of God.