

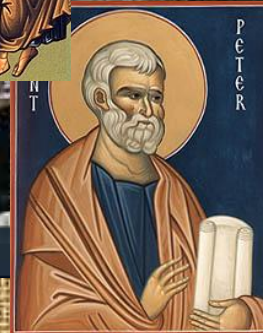
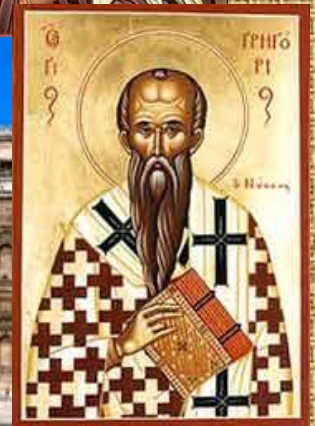
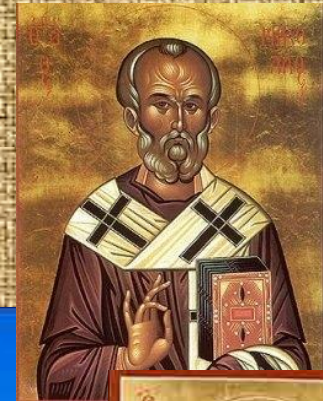
DIVINE REVELATION

“By Word of Mouth”

(2 Thessalonians 2:15):

Handing On

Part IIIa:
Paradosis--Handing On;
A Biblical Model
of Handing On Truth



Paradosis: Handing On Divine Revelation

Catholic Christians believe that in Jesus Christ the Lord is summed up the entire Revelation of the most high God.

On Divine Revelation, 7, Vatican Council II

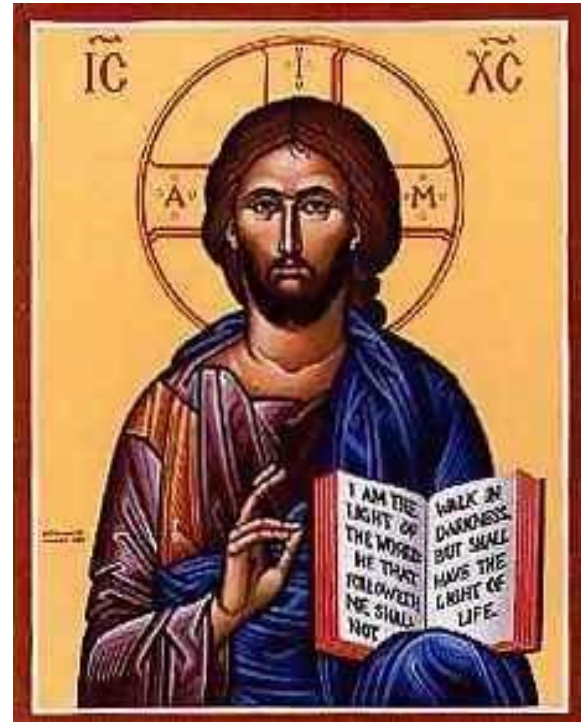
“Therefore [it is] Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up...”



21 Centuries Timeline

2 Corinthians 1:20

For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him (Jesus Christ).



2 Corinthians 4:5-6

For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus. For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to bring to light the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of (Jesus) Christ.

The Revelation of Yahweh to His chosen People was given to the Israelites and transmitted from generation to generation for centuries.

Peter defined the process of handing down the Revelation of Yahweh from father to son. The Greek word for this **process of handing on the Word of God** is *paradosis* .

1 Peter 1:18-19

... realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, **handed on** (*patroparadotos*) by your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless and unblemished lamb

The New Testament authors referred frequently to the process of “handing on” the Word of God to His People.

Luke 1:1-2

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have **handed them down** (*paredosan*) to us.

1 Corinthians 11:23

For I received from the Lord what I also **handed on** (*paredoka*) to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread ...





1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For I **handed on** (*paredoka*) to you as of first importance what I also received ...

2 Timothy 2:2

And what you heard from me through many witnesses **entrust** (*parathou*) to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.

It is Paul who makes the distinction of modes in which the Revelation of God to His People can be handed on.

Paul also called the process of handing on the Word of God “tradition.” He then terms two ways in which **“traditions”** are transmitted, **by word, orally, and by letter, written.**

2 Thessalonians 2:15

Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the **traditions** (*paradoseis*) that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.



Therefore, Catholic Christians believe that the Bible--written tradition--is not the only source of Revelation.

And, Catholic Christians believe, the Bible does not teach that it is the only source of Revelation.

John 20:30

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are **not written in this book**.

John 21:25

There are also **many other things** that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.

The official teaching of the Catholic Church reflects Biblical teaching on the whole of Revelation.

On Divine Revelation, 9, 10, Vatican Council II

“Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other ... Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up ***a single deposit of the Word of God***, which is entrusted to the Church.”



Catholic Christians believe that the Bible affirms that God's way of revealing himself to His People is to choose certain people for these tasks:

in the **Hebrew Scriptures** these people were the patriarchs, prophets, judges, and kings;

in the **New Testament**, these people are apostles, prophets, teachers, and faithful people.



Paul defines the New Testament people chosen to hand on the Revelation of the Word of God.

2 Timothy 2:2

And what you heard from me through many witnesses **entrust to faithful people** who will have the ability to teach others as well.



Paul also continues to describe who the "faithful people" are who are to hand on the Revelation of God.



The first category of “faithful people” is ***episcopus***, bishop.

1 Timothy 3:1-2

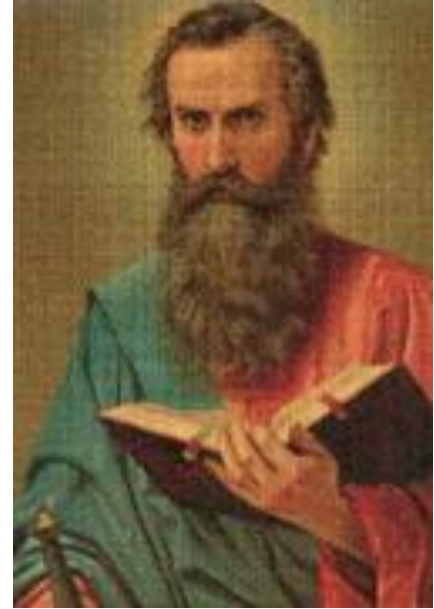
This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of **bishop** (***episcopos***) desires a noble task. Therefore, a **bishop** (***episcopos***) must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach.



Titus 1:7-9

For a **bishop** (*episcopon*) as God's steward must be blameless, ... holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.

The second category of “faithful people” is *presbyteros*, a presbyter, priest, elder.



Titus 1:5-6

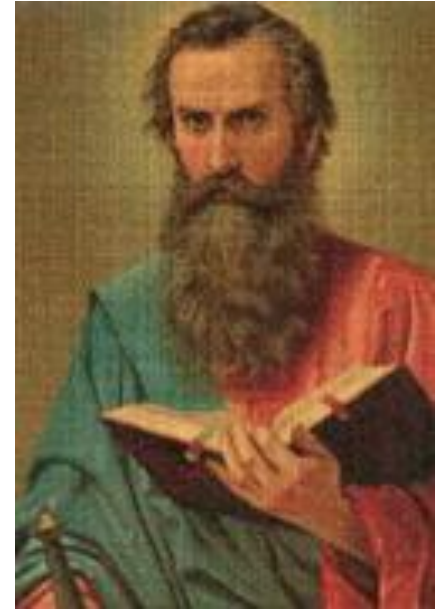
Appoint **presbyters** (*presbyterois*) in every town, as I directed you, on condition that a man be blameless, married only once, with believing children who are not accused of licentiousness or rebellious.



1 Timothy 5:17

Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor, especially those who toil in preaching and teaching.

The third category of “faithful people” is ***diakonos***, deacon.

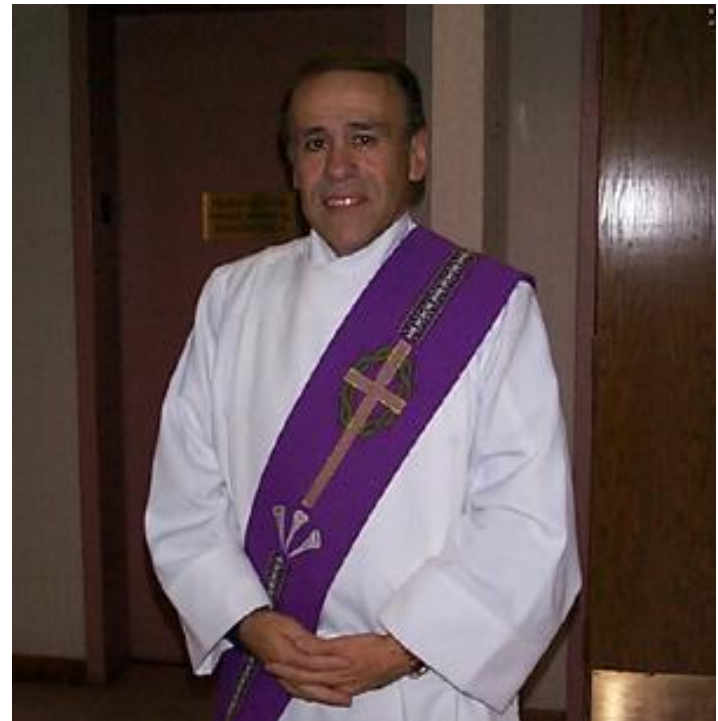


1 Timothy 4:6,13,16

If you will give these instructions to the brothers, you will be a good **minister** (***diakonos***) of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching you have followed. ... Until I arrive, attend to the reading, exhortation, and teaching. ... Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

1 Timothy 3:8-9

Similarly, **deacons** (*diakonous*) must be dignified, not deceitful, not addicted to drink, not greedy for sordid gain, holding fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

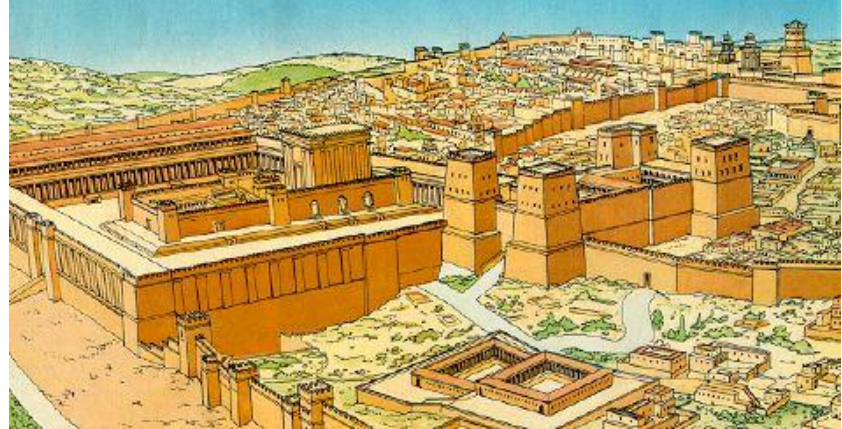


The Bible testifies that the Apostolic Church exercised this teaching authority (“holding fast to the true message ... to refute opponents” [Titus 1:9]) beyond the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.

The Acts of the Apostles records that there were different truths being taught regarding keeping the Mosaic Law. One group represented by Judaizers taught that Gentile Christians must come to the Christian life through keeping the Mosaic Law; the second group represented by Paul taught that Gentile Christians did not need to keep the Mosaic Law.

There was also no Scripture regarding the truth of the issue. So they appealed to the authority of the Holy Spirit in council. The Catholic Church has followed this model ever since.

The Biblical Model for Handing On Truth and Refuting Error: Acts 15, The Council of Jerusalem



Error in teaching:

Acts 15:1

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.”

Dissension and controversy:

Acts 15:2

Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, ...

First Century Timeline

BC AD

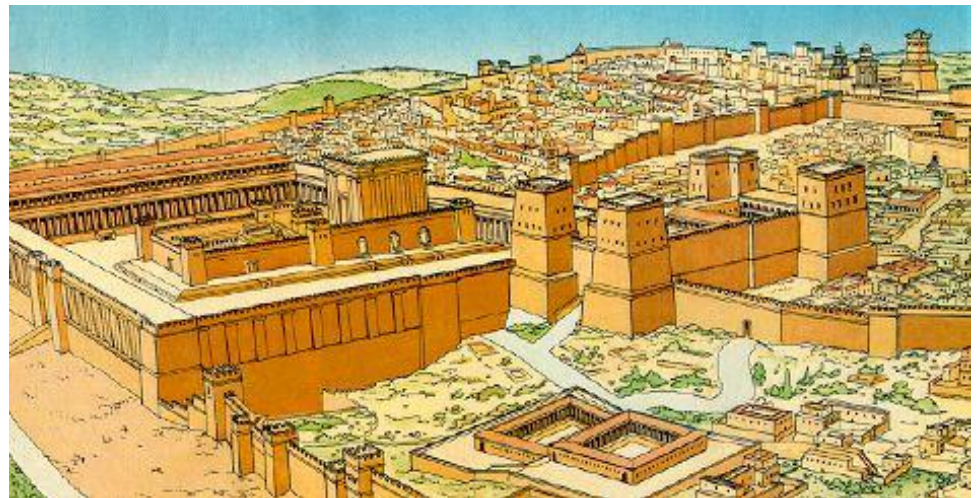
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Appeal to the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem: **Acts 15:2**

... it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question.

Apostles and presbyters convened: **Acts 15:6**

The apostles and the presbyters met together to see about this matter.



Discussion:

Acts 15:7-11

After much debate had taken place, Peter got up and said to them, “My brothers, you are well aware that from early days God made his choice among you that through my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the holy Spirit just as he did us. He made no distinction between us and them, for by faith he purified their hearts. Why, then, are you now putting God to the test by placing on the shoulders of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they.”

Barnabas and Paul

Acts 15:12

The whole assembly fell silent, and they listened while Paul and Barnabas described the signs and wonders God had worked among the Gentiles through them.

James

Acts 15:13-21

After they had fallen silent, James responded, “My brothers, listen to me. Symeon has described how God first concerned himself with acquiring from among the Gentiles a people for his name. The words of the prophets agree with this, as is written: ‘After this I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; from its ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again, so that the rest of humanity may seek out the Lord, even all the Gentiles on whom my name is invoked. Thus says the Lord who accomplishes these things, known from of old.’~

It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God, but tell them by letter to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood. For Moses, for generations now, has had those who proclaim him in every town, as he has been read in the synagogues every sabbath.”

Problem is resolved:

Acts 15:22

Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided ..



Decree is promulgated:

Acts 15:22-23

The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them: “The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings.”

The authority of the Holy Spirit is appealed:

Acts 15:28

It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us ...



Paradosis or tradition falls into two categories.

The difference can be seen in Acts 15. Besides the issue of following the Mosaic Law for gentile converts, which meant primarily circumcision, the Council of Jerusalem also decreed that converts had “to avoid pollution from idols, unlawful marriage, the meat of strangled animals, and blood” (Acts 15:20).

There are clearly distinguished ***paradosis* or traditions** which are considered irrevocable, unchangeable, even to our day, e.g. circumcision is not a requirement for new Christians. On the other hand, today we would not be concerned with “pollution from idols,” how an animal is killed for meat, or whether blood is in our food. These appear to be different traditions from the former--changeable and not binding in the same way as non-circumcision.

The Catholic Church also follows this biblical model in her approach to *paradosis*/traditions.

Hence, there are *paradosis*/traditions which are unchangeable, **capital letter “T”, “Traditions.”** These are the defined faith or moral teachings based on the Bible but revealed by the Holy Spirit as an authority in the Church (Acts 15:28). An example from the history of the Catholic Church of *Tradition* (with a capital letter “T”) is the teaching on purgatory. This teaching of the Church can never change.

There appear to be *paradosis*/traditions which are changeable, **small letter “t”, “traditions.”** These are the “rules of the organization, rules of the club.” These change as people, culture, faith and understanding develop. An example from the history of the Catholic Church of *tradition* (with a lower case letter “t”) is the teaching on the prohibition of eating meat on Fridays. This practice of mandatory abstinence as penance in the Church has changed.

Acts 15 Model: General or Ecumenical Councils of the Church Universal

Following the example of the Apostolic Church in the persons of the Apostles in the book of Acts, especially chapter 15, the Catholic Church is motivated by a number of scriptures.

The Catholic Church takes seriously the need to know the truth and to refute error.

John 15:26

When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

John 16:12-13

I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

2 Peter 2:1

There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, **bringing swift destruction on themselves.**

Titus 1: 7, 9-11

For a bishop (*episcopon*) as God's steward ... holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents. For there are also many rebels, idle talkers and deceivers ... **It is imperative to silence them.**

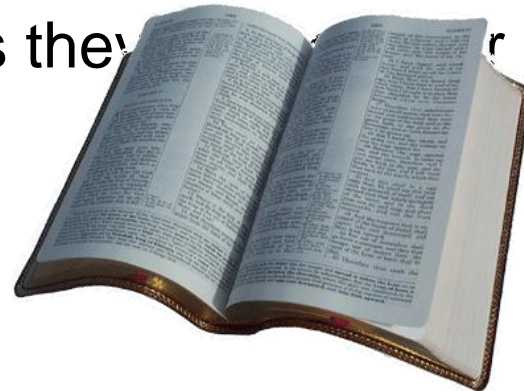
Galatians 1: 6-9

I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by (the) grace (of Christ) for a different gospel (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, **let that one be accursed!**

The Catholic Church also understands the need to interpret correctly the truth of all of the Bible. The Bible warns us that there will be incorrect interpretation without authority. All interpretations of a scripture cannot be equally true (it is contrary to the nature of truth); some interpretations of the same scripture are mutually incompatible (e.g., Matthew 16:16; John 6). Hence there must be an authority to whom truth and error can be appealed.

2 Peter 3:16

In them (Paul's letters) there are some things hard to understand that **the ignorant and unstable distort** to their own destruction, just as they do the scriptures.



The Catholic Church accepts the authority both of Divine Revelation and of the Holy Spirit. Deviation from the truth must be cursed and condemned.

Romans 13:1-2

Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, **whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves.**

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord (Jesus) will kill with the breath of his mouth and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming, the one whose coming springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in signs and wonders that lie, and in every wicked deceit for those who are perishing because they have not accepted the love of truth so that they may be saved. Therefore, God is sending them a deceiving power so that they may believe the lie, that **all who have not believed the truth but have approved wrongdoing may be condemned.**

The Catholic Church has, in all ages, understood both



the need for renewal and reformation of Christian faith and living, and general revival in the Church as a whole, and

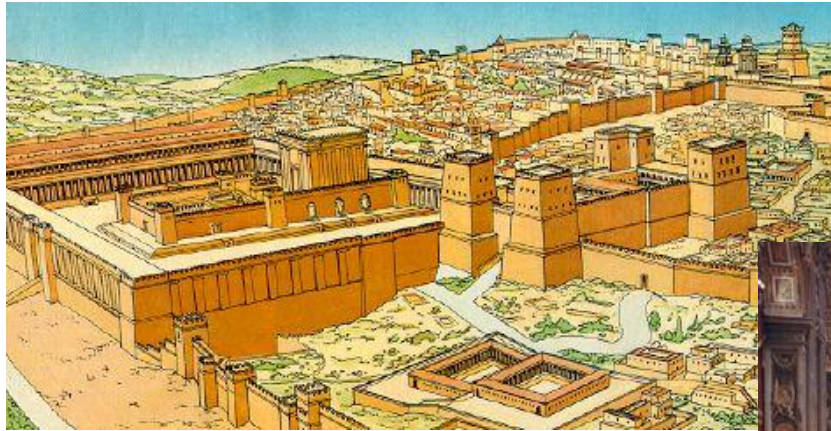


the need to teach the truth when confronted with error.

The Church exercised her teaching authority (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) and called the faithful people entrusted with teaching others together in universal (ecumenical) council for renewal and reformation, and when truths were abandoned and error (heresy) was being taught (Titus 1:9). The truth was expressed and defined; error and false teachers condemned (*anathema sit*, "let them [him, it] be anathema, condemned, damned").

The history of the ecumenical councils attests to the fidelity of the Catholic Church to the teaching and direction of both the authority of Scripture and the authority of the Holy Spirit.

The following section presents in summary form the history of the ecumenical councils of the Church throughout history from the Council of Jerusalem to Vatican II.



End of

Divine Revelation: By Mouth, Part IIIa

Go to

Divine Revelation, By Mouth, Part IIIb