

this commission at Christ's Ascension and then receiving the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the apostles began to preach Christ and witness to him: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses" (*Acts* 2:32). Following the example of Christ the Teacher, the apostles transmit his Gospel to their own disciples through the living word of preaching, calling upon all to preserve it: "Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us" (*2 Tm* 1:14).

34 The apostles have entrusted us with "all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning" (*Acts* 1:1). The holy apostle Paul testifies to this when he writes to the faithful in Thessalonica: "So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (*2 Thes* 2:15). The Church has always called upon Christians to remain faithful to the teachings of the apostles, and thus, she has preserved the immutability of Holy Tradition, and by this token, her faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The essence of Tradition consists in faithfully following Christ within the Church for all generations, until the end of time. Holy Tradition is unchangeable because its content is Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday and today and forever (see *Heb* 13:8).

2. Faithfulness to Tradition

35 The unbroken continuity of Tradition is realized in the liturgical life of the Church, and in the teachings of the Holy Fathers, whose witness to the Truth is based not on human recollections, but on a living and uninterrupted experience of the Holy Spirit. The constancy of this experience within the Christian community is the safeguard of our faithfulness to the apostles' teaching, to the heritage of the Holy Fathers, and to the teaching of the Church, which strengthens our hope in the promise of the coming age. Faithfulness to Tradition is faithfulness to new life in Christ, which has been transmitted by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and from them to the bishops, the presbyters, the deacons, and all the faithful.

36 The first Christian communities preserved and transmitted the apostolic teaching; they preached the word of God and lived by it (see *Phil* 2:6-11), continually abiding in "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, [devoting themselves] to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (*Acts* 2:42). Especially in the "breaking of the bread," Christians recognized the fulfilment of the Gospel and the presence of Christ among them (see *Lk* 24:31). At the same time, they announced the arrival of

the coming age. They did so while living in this world, yet not being "of this world" (see *Jn* 15:19; 17:14). These words can be fully applied to the Church today, which maintains within herself the Apostolic Tradition. Following the example of Peter, the Church unceasingly calls all people to repentance and baptism, by which they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: "For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him" (*Acts* 2:39). The faithful receive a foretaste of these events and of the coming of the kingdom of God in the Most Holy Eucharist, where the encounter and communion of God and humankind is realized. This is the content of Tradition by which the Church lived in apostolic times, by which she lives today, and by which she will live in the age to come.

3. Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture

37 The Church believes and teaches:

there exists a close connection and communication between Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring ... tend toward the same end. For Holy Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, while Holy Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.²⁷

On the basis of the Holy Scriptures, the Church establishes the truth of oral Tradition, which in turn interprets and explains the Holy Scriptures. The oral Tradition is expressed through the teachings of the *Holy Fathers*, especially at ecumenical and local *Councils*. For this reason, the Church teaches us to receive with faith and to respect both the Holy Scriptures and the oral Tradition.

C. The Holy Scriptures

38 In his providence, God envisaged the transmission of his Revelation also in written form. This would give the opportunity to preserve his Revelation unchangeable, and to transmit it from generation to generation throughout human history. People inspired by God transcribed God's word forming the Bible (from the Greek *Biblia*, meaning *books*),

²⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* [The Word of God], 9.