

uncovered the depths of this Revelation. In their sermons and explanations, the Fathers of the Church further deepened the understanding of Apostolic Tradition and professed it in a conciliar fashion. Their heritage is an integral part of Holy Tradition. In the course of each liturgical year, the Church commemorates the Holy Fathers, who clearly defined at Ecumenical Councils that which in the Church has been believed always, everywhere, and by all.*

58 The unified conciliar thought of the Fathers defined the content of faith. Thanks to this, the faith endured for centuries without error and was professed in the fullness of truth. The definitions of faith provided by the Ecumenical Councils acquired the status of *dogmas*, and they became the unchangeable teachings of the Church. Through these dogmas, the Fathers delineated the true profession of the Mysteries of God, defending the Tradition from erroneous interpretations. The transmission of faith continues to this day through the ministry of bishops, the successors of the apostles. We refer to this ministry as the "Teaching Office" (in Latin, *Magisterium*) of the Church, when bishops transmit with one mind, always and everywhere, that which they have received from the apostles.

59 The conciliar dogmatic definitions of faith were based upon the consensus of the Fathers (in Latin, *consensus Patrum*). Saints such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, Leo the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory the Great, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and others all contributed to this unified conciliar thinking of the Church.

2. Enculturation of the Good News

60 The Gospel of Christ has been preached to various nations within the diversity of their cultures.⁴⁵ This process has been called *enculturation*—the expression of the one Tradition within the diversity of local traditions, and the convergence of evangelization with the particularities of human cultures, languages, ways of life, and ways of thinking.

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional traditions born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed.⁴⁶

* See VINCENT OF LERINS, *Commonitory for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith*, 6: PL 50, 615.

⁴⁵ See VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* [Joy and Hope], 58.

⁴⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 83.

The one Tradition was to be expressed in various cultures that are transfigured by the power of the Gospel, in accordance with the words of the apostle Paul:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews ... To those outside of the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) that I might win those outside the law ... I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some (1 *Cor* 9:20-22).

- 61 The enculturation of the Gospel bore fruit in the formation of various Christian traditions: Byzantine, Latin, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, and others. Already from the very first centuries, Christianity also spread into the lands of the ancient Slavic tribes. By the ninth century, two brothers from Thessalonica, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Equal to the Apostles, translated the Gospel and texts of divine services into a language that the Slavic nations could understand. "By incarnating the Gospel in the native culture of the peoples which they were evangelizing, Saints Cyril and Methodius were especially meritorious for the formation and development of that same culture, or rather of many cultures."⁴⁷ From among the Christian cultures fostered by the Slavs, there also arose the Christian culture of Rus-Ukraine, where the one ecclesial Tradition developed into a particular ecclesial tradition.
- 62 In this way, the one Gospel of Jesus Christ took flesh in the multitude of cultures of Christian peoples; the one Tradition of the Word of God was expressed in a diversity of traditions. Through its own tradition, every particular Church makes its own contribution to the understanding of this one Tradition.

3. Growth in Faith: Catechumenate, Illumination, Sacramental Initiation

- 63 In the first centuries, the catechesis of non-baptized adults in the Church took place in three stages: Catechumenate, Illumination, and Initiation. The Catechumenate (from the Greek *katekhoumenos*, meaning *one being instructed*) began with the presentation of a new candidate to the Christian community. With the agreement of the community, the candidate became a catechumen. The name of this person was announced to the community; and now, the Holy Scriptures would be announced to the catechumen. Such catechumens sometimes remained in the narthex of the church, which served as an outward symbol of the catechumens' inner spiritual state: they were leaving the world behind,

⁴⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Slavorum Apostoli* [Apostles to the Slavs], 21.