

You spoke to us through the mouths of your servants the Prophets, announcing to us beforehand the salvation that was to come; you gave the law as a help; you appointed angels as guardians. And when the fullness of time had come, you spoke to us through your Son, through whom you had also made the ages. (Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)

B. Holy Tradition

30 God the Father, who revealed himself through his Son in the Holy Spirit, offers his life to the faithful through the Church. The gracious action of the Holy Spirit, who reveals truth—and life in that truth—to all who live in communion with God, we call Holy Tradition. God, "who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 *Tm* 2:4), that is, to the knowledge of Jesus Christ (see *Jn* 14:6), reveals to humanity "what has been hidden since the foundation of the world" (*Mt* 13:35). His word remains firm and unchangeable: "In his gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations."²⁰ Therefore, Christ is to be preached to all nations and all peoples, so that God's Revelation may thus reach the ends of the earth.

31 According to Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, the essence of Holy Tradition is this—that all Christians share one and the same faith, by which they become partakers of God's life:

All receive one and the same God the Father, and believe in the same dispensation regarding the incarnation of the Son of God, and are cognizant of the same gift of the Spirit, and are conversant with the same commandments, and preserve the same form of ecclesiastical constitution, and expect the same advent of the Lord, and await the same salvation of the complete man, that is, of the soul and body.²¹

According to the testimony of Saint Basil the Great, Holy Tradition is that which "the Lord himself taught us, what the apostles preached, what the Fathers held fast, and what the martyrs confirmed."²² It includes all that was transmitted to us by Christ himself, as well as the teaching of the apostles and the faith of the Church. Saint Basil notes:

²⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* [The Word of God], 7.

²¹ IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against Heresies*, V, 20, 1: PG 7, 1177.

²² BASIL THE GREAT, *Against Sabellian, and Arius, and Anomeans*, Homily 24, 6: PG 31, 612.

... of the beliefs and practices which are preserved in the Church, some that we possess are derived from written teaching; others we have received, delivered to us through the Mysteries and by Apostolic Tradition; all of these in relation to true religion have the same force ... Were we to attempt to reject such customs as having no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its essentials; or, rather, we would make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more."²³

Saint Basil connects Holy Tradition with liturgical life, noting that in addition to the profession of faith in the Most Holy Trinity, it also embraces the sign of the Cross in the Rite of Reception into the Catholic Church; one's orientation during prayer, that is, facing East; the renunciation of Satan and his dominion; the triple immersion at Baptism; standing during worship on Sundays; the *epiklesis* [i.e., invocation of the Holy Spirit] in the Eucharist; the blessing of water and oil, and so forth.²⁴

1. Apostolic Tradition

32 Christ entrusts the word of Revelation to his apostles: "... for the words that you [Father] gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them ... I have given them your word" (*Jn* 17:8, 14). The Church continues the apostolic mission in the transmission of God's Revelation. She is called to preach and to interpret it. To fulfil this, Christ gave his Church the Holy Spirit, who leads her into all truth (see *Jn* 16:13). The Church transmits God's Revelation in two ways: *orally*—"by the apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with him, and from what he did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit;"²⁵ and *in writing*—"by those apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing."²⁶

33 Christ chooses his apostles and sends them to preach the Word: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (*Mt* 28:19-20). Having received

²³ BASIL THE GREAT, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27: PG 32,190-192.

²⁴ See BASIL THE GREAT, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27: PG 32, 185-196.

²⁵ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* [The Word of God], 7.

²⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* [The Word of God], 7.