

Chapter 2: God Comes to Us

“For us men and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” (*from the Nicene creed*)

God Reveals His Plan

“Through the use of reason, we can learn much about God from both creation and conscience” (natural law), “but Revelation enables us to learn about God’s inner life and His loving plan to save us from sin and share in His divine life. No amount of unaided thinking could penetrate such a mystery.” (USCCA)

- * Heb. 4:3(b): “and yet His works were accomplished at the foundation of the world.”
- * John 8:58: “Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.’”
- * We couldn’t make up this God, unlike the Greeks and the Romans, etc.

“God’s revelation unfolded gradually throughout history.” (USCCA)

- * you don’t read Shakespeare to a 2-year-old...

Exodus 3:1-15, 4:10-16 - “In the encounter of God with Moses, God reveals Himself: ‘I AM’ – these words reveal something about God, Who, nevertheless, still remains mysterious.” (USCCA)

- * God is existence, He needs no other defining words. A cup, a chair, a person – all limited in their existence – but God is *not* limited.
- * God reveals His name to Moses

“This is the grand drama of the dialogue between God and His people that takes place in our lived history...” (USCCA)

- * God promised Noah that never again would there be a catastrophe that threatened the existence of humanity (Gen. 8:20-21)
- * God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 12:1-7, 15:1-6)
- * God promised Israel that they would always be his people when Moses led them from slavery out of Egypt into the promised land (Ex. 19:1-6)

“It requires faith to respond to God’s revealing word and to perceive the divine action in history.”
(USCCA)

- * What do Noah, Abraham, and Moses have in common? (Gen. 6:11, Gen. 12, and Ex. 3:11)

“God’s Revelation disturbed and changed the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, and others.” (USCCA)

- * Moses at the burning bush, trembled and took off his shoes (Exodus 3:1-6)
- * Isaiah’s vision of the glory of God – “woe is me!” (Isaiah 6:5)
- * Peter to Jesus: “depart from me...” (Luke 5:8)

Why? God is pure Love and Light, and as we draw closer and closer to the Light, we start to see our “dirt & debris” – our sins – clearer and clearer, like sunlight flooding into a darkened room.

- * “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)
- * “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)
- * But nothing unclean will enter it...” (Rev. 21:27)

The Gospel and Culture

“The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time.” (Pope Paul VI – 1963-1978)

“Religion does not exist in a vacuum ... But there are troubling developments ... In many ways, attitudes and actions in the United States have fostered a culture of disbelief.” (USCCA)

- * Freedom of ‘worship’?
- * do people know we are Christian? Catholic?
- * Flannery O’Connor: “For the hard of hearing, you shout – for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.”

“The Church’s response is to bring the Gospel into our culture in order to build on what is positive in it and to change what is not.” (USCCA)

- * Who is the Church? (“ite missa est”)
- * John 4 - the woman at the well

Chapter 3: Proclaim the Gospel

Sacred Tradition

“On the road to Emmaus (Lk 24), the risen Jesus showed the two disciples how the teachings of the prophets were fulfilled in Him and proclaimed by His own lips. Just before His Ascension, Christ commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel to all...” (Mt 28:19) (USCCA)

“Graced by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles did what Jesus commanded them. They did this orally, in writing, by the heroic sanctity of their lives, and by ensuring that there would be successors for this mission.” (USCCA)

- * the Christian faith was spread throughout the world by 12 men!
- * “apostolos” (Gr) = “sent” (where we get “postal” from)

“The Apostles chose men to be bishops to succeed them and handed on to them what they received from Jesus ... The Pope and bishops in union with him are successors of the Apostles and inherit the responsibility of authoritative teaching from them. We call this teaching office the Magisterium.” (USCCA)

- * Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, the Magisterium – 3-legged stool
- * Catecheo – to echo back

“Tradition is the living transmission of the message of the Gospel in the Church.” (USCCA)

- * “Hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you.” (1 Cor. 11:2)
- * “Therefore, brethren, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by oral statement or by a letter of ours.” (2 Thes 2:15)
- * “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.” (Jn 21:25)
- * Pharisees’ tradition (*qorban*) (Mk 7:11)

Sacred Scripture

“The Church accepts and venerates the Bible as inspired. The Bible is composed of the 46 books in the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament ... Sacred Scripture is inspired by God and is the Word of God.” (USCCA)

“There are those in modern society who ... reject the Bible as a collection of stories and myths ... and others who are identified as ‘Scripture scholars’ who work to de-mythologize the Scriptures ... remove or explain away the miraculous ... Another challenge comes from ‘scholars’ and others who deny the supernatural aspects of the Gospels, such as the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection ... we call this “reductionism” because it reduces all Scripture to the natural order.” (USCCA)

- * Jesus Seminar
- * The plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea (Ex. 7, 14)
- * The feeding of the 5,000 (Mt. 14:13-21, Mk 6:31-44, Lk 9:10-17, Jn 6:1-14)

Interpretation of Scripture

“When interpreting Scripture, we should be attentive to what God wanted to reveal through the authors for our salvation ... The task of giving an authoritative interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the Magisterium.” (USCCA)

* “... So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.” (2 Peter 3:15-16)

- * Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39)

There are “various literary forms: history, hymns, wisdom sayings, poetry” etc.

“The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis (the process scholars use to determine the meaning of the text)” (USCCA)

- * exegesis - ‘pulling out the meaning’

“The interpreter ‘must look for that meaning which the sacred writer ... given the circumstance of his time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary literary form’ [DV] (USCCA)

- * how quickly the meanings of words in our own language and time have changed
- * “I never said you stole the money”