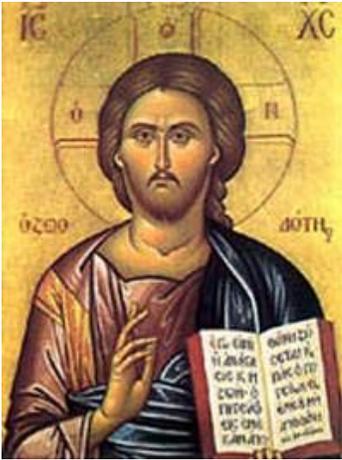


3.04 - The Role of Doctrine in the Catechumenate - Mary Birmingham



- **We hear words such as...**
- Tradition
- Dogma
- Doctrine
- Creed
- Hierarchy of Truths

- **You are a catechized Catholic seeking Confirmation.**
- Greek: *paradosis*
- Latin: *traditio*
 - That which has been handed down or passed on.
- Not to be confused with customs, beliefs, and teachings that are popular but unofficial expressions of the community's faith.

- **TRADITION**
- The shared faith experience of the Christian community—its life in Christ in and through the Holy Spirit—and the handing on of that faith.
- **Vincent of Lerins (450 ad) argued for triple authentication**
- 1. quod unquam, (what is always)
- 2. quod semper, (what is everywhere)
- 3. quo ab omnibus creditum est. (what is believed by everybody)
- Ecumenicity or universality: What is believed everywhere.
- Antiquity: What was always believed.
- Consent or consensus: What is believed by all people. McGrath

- **This triple criterion was the method used to**
- **Determine which sacred writings would ultimately end up in the Biblical canon.**
- **Identify false teaching, teachers and heresy.**
- **Determine orthodox teaching, creeds and confessions of faith.**

- **Tradition is far more than a regard for what the ancient Church believed**

- ▶ Tradition is a living, organic reality that expresses the faith of the community—a faith that is received from one generation, proclaimed to the present generation, celebrated and passed on the next.
- **Dei Verbum #8**
- And so the Church in her teaching, life, and worship perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.” The tradition develops...with the help of the Holy Spirit...there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down.”
- Dei Verbum insists—yes there is one source of revelation---God alone---but two modalities---Scripture and Tradition.

- **Tradition Conversion Centered Catechesis**
- Finds official expression in...
 - Scripture
 - Liturgy
 - Creed
 - Doctrine
 - Living witness of the community
- It includes:
 - Sense of all the faithful
 - Scholarly work of theologians
 - Witness of prophetic voices
 - Pastoral leadership of bishops
 - Supreme teaching authority of the Church

- DOGMA**
- Doctrines: beliefs that have become official Church teachings due to the fact that they have been authoritatively taught by the magisterium.
- Dogma: teaching or doctrine believed to have been revealed by God and taught by the Church's most solemn teaching authority such as ecumenical councils, ex cathedra [infallible teachings of the papal magisterium]
- DOGMA REVEALS THE TRUTH OF DIVINE REVELATION**
- **Profession of faith**
- When a person is received into full communion of the Catholic Church he or she says: I believe all that the Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims to be revealed by God.
- Many think that to mean..."all that the Church teaches."
- Rather it is translated from the Latin in the Roman rite and it means, "I believe all the Church teaches that God has revealed. It is referring to DOGMA.
- They are asked to accept all divinely revealed DOGMA.
- **THERE IS NEVER ANY DISSENT OVER DOGMA**
- **DOGMAS REVEAL THE TRUTH OF DIVINE REVELATION.**

- **DOCTRINE**
 - Doctrines teach and explain how a particular dogma may be understood.
 - Doctrinal statements are used by the Church to explain in concepts what the Church believes about its faith.
 - Just as we share the faith we have been given by expressing it in words, so does Holy Mother Church put her faith into words through doctrine.
 - Doctrines seek to give expression and language to truths that are often inexpressible.
 - Our language about God is at best analogical.
 - God is not a man, God is not a woman, and the Spirit is not a bird. Yet the Church must use language (inadequate as it sometimes may be) in order to explain our beliefs.
 - **Doctrines develop. Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith tells us**
 - Every expression of revelation [which includes our creeds, doctrines, dogmas, teachings of the magisterium, even Scripture] is historically conditioned and therefore is limited.
 - The way we speak about revelation could be limited by the way language is used, by limited knowledge and concepts of the time and age and by specific concerns that motivated a particular teaching in the first place.
 - Role of doctrine is to interpret the language of doctrines to better express the faith it is intended to express.
 - That is why doctrines change and evolve.
 - For example, Vatican II reinterpreted the infallibility doctrine expressed by Vatican I by including the bishops in the infallible teaching authority of the Church.
 - **In Summary...**
 - Dogma defines Divine revelation—what has been revealed by God.
 - Doctrine explains and teaches how a particular dogma may be understood.
 - **CREED**
 - Some people use the word doctrine and creed interchangeably.
 - Do they mean the same thing?
 - A creed is a concise, formal and universally accepted and authorized statement of main points of Christian faith.
 - The English word creed derives from credo “I believe”---first words of Apostles Creed—most familiar of all creeds.
 - The word creed has come to refer to a statement of faith, summarizing the main points of Christian belief, which is common to all Christians.
 - A creed pertains to the entire Christian Church and includes a statement of belief which every Christian accepts.
 - A creed is recognized as a concise, formal, and universally accepted and authorized statement of main points of Christian faith
 - **Hierarchy of Truths**
 - There exists an order or hierarchy of truths. Not all doctrines are of equal importance since they vary in their relationship to the foundation of Christian faith.
 - Just because there is a hierarchy of truths does not mean we can eliminate other truths. It means that there is a priority and an ordering—there are foundational truths.
 - Fosters intimate relationship with Christ, who died, rose again, ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to live within us.
 - All levels of catechesis should carefully consider the hierarchy of truths in the presentation of the Christian message. All aspects and dimensions of the Christian message are related to these principle truths.
 - **Does that mean there are some things we do not have to believe?**
 - It means that all of Christian truth is organized around a core center—the mystery of the Trinity.
 -
 - The GDC insists that this hierarchy ---ordering of truths does not mean that some truths pertain to faith itself less than others, but rather that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority are enlightened by them.
 - **St. Augustine listed five things in his catechism for converts to the faith.**
 - TEN COMMANDMENTS
 - BEATITUDES
 - CREED
 - LORD’S PRAYER
 - SACRAMENTS
 - The RCIA tells us that DOGMA is to be complete in its coverage (75)
- If in your formation of catechumens any of the hierarchy of truths have been shortchanged---they in essence have not been formed in the Christian tradition.
- **CENTRAL TRUTHS OF OUR FAITH**
 - ▶ Mystery of God the Father, Son and Spirit, Creator of all things; Mystery of Christ the incarnate Word, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered, died and rose for our salvation;
 - ▶ The mystery of the Holy Spirit, who is present in the Church, sanctifying it and guiding it until the glorious coming of Christ our Savior and Judge; and the mystery of the Church, which is Christ’s Mystical Body, in which the Virgin Mary holds a preeminent place.
 - ▶ Baptism as the foundational sacrament of Christian life, which celebrates the saving action of Christ’s life, death and resurrection; which grafts us onto the

vine that is Christ and which gives us a share in his mission to realize the Reign of God.

- ▶ The history of salvation, organized in reference to Christ.
- ▶ The Apostles Creed as a “synthesis of and a key to reading all Church doctrine...”
- ▶ The sacraments as “an organic whole in which each particular sacrament has its own vital place “[CCC 1211]
- ▶ The Eucharist as the “Sacrament of sacraments,” to which all the other sacraments are ordered
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- ▶ The Eucharist as the “Sacrament of sacraments,” to which all the other sacraments are ordered
- ▶ The double commandment of love of God and neighbor as the centerpiece of Jesus’ moral teaching, summing up the Decalogue and lived in the spirit of the Beatitudes—“the whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments Mt/ 22:40”.
- ▶ The Our Father as the synthesis of prayer contained in sacred Scripture and in the life of the Church.

What about DOGMA and DOCTRINE IN THE RCIA

- ▶ THE RCIA TELLS US THAT DOGMA MUST BE PRESENTED IN ITS ENTIRETY. (75)
- ▶ DOGMA IS ACCOMMODATED TO THE LITURGICAL CYCLE.
- ▶ RATHER THAN SCOPE AND SEQUENCE, THE TRUTHS OF THE FAITH UNFOLD WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LITURGY AND THE LITURGICAL YEAR.
- **FORMATION IN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION (RCIA 75-78)**
- Celebrations of the Word in dialogue with exegesis.
- Appropriate acquaintance with dogma.
- Doctrine and teaching that flows from the liturgical year and liturgy.
- Catholic teaching in entirety.
- **How do we effectively pass on the tradition?**
- WE TEACH AS JESUS DID.
- **Emmaus Model of Conversion Centered Learning**
- What was Jesus first question to the disciples he met on the road to Emmaus?
- “What are you discussing as you walk along?”
- What was their response?
- They shared their (1) **EXPERIENCE**.
- He allowed them to articulate their (2) **UNDERSTANDING** of the Jerusalem events before he taught them.
- He used their understanding of events (they were downcast) as a springboard to teach and explain everything in the prophetic (3)

TRADITION/DOCTRINE that referred to him (doctrine/content).

- He used word, ritual and sacrament to help explain the meaning of their experience and bring it into dialogue with the prophetic TRADITION.
- He taught them DOCTRINE using words, actions and symbol.
- He taught them DOCTRINE by using what they already knew deep down in their hearts.
- They entered into (4) **CRITICAL REFLECTION** on their experience of the Risen Christ.
- They shared how it touched them.
- They shared what they learned.
- They reflected upon the TRADITION and what it meant.
- “Were not our hearts burning within us?”
- (5) **CONVERSION AND TRANSFORMATION** their lives transformed, they took what they received and went back to Jerusalem.
- They made a (6) **DECISION** to walk into the lion’s den and embrace the Paschal Mystery in their lives.
- Conversion!!!

RESOURCES

- * **Formed in Faith** (Sessions for Inquiry, Catechumenate, and Ongoing Faith Formation), Mary Birmingham. World Library Publications (wlpmusic.com)
- * **Confirming Adult Catholics: Five Sessions for Preparation and Reflection**, Mary Birmingham. World Library Publications (wlpmusic.com)
- * **Purified and Enlightened** - RCIA Sessions for Lent, Mary Birmingham. World Library Publications (wlpmusic.com)
- * **Year Round Catechumenate** Mary Birmingham, Liturgical Training Publications
- * **Faith, Life and Creed** (A Complete Catechesis for Christian Life
- * (User friendly sessions for breaking open the Word for every Sunday of each cycle plus 41 doctrinal sessions). Available through (TEAMRCIA.COM).
- * **Come to the Table**
- * Resource for small faith communities. <https://pastoral.center/>
- * **Word and Worship Workbook, Year A, B and C**, Mary Birmingham, Paulist Press
- * mbirmingham@cfl.rr.com