

Revelation

In matters of Faith, Revelation refers to God's communication with His people, or more specifically, His desire to speak to you. God, who made all things, made you for a purpose, and He desires to be known by you. And more than that, He wants to invite you into a relationship with Him, so that He can share that unique purpose with you, and that together with Him, you might find joy in achieving the great plan that He has for your life.

The word that we translate as "revelation" derives from a Hebrew wedding rite and could literally be translated as "the unveiling." The biblical authors perhaps chose the word to bring to mind for their audience that moment at a wedding where the bride is "unveiled". They wanted their readers to understand that God does not just want to reveal Himself to us, but rather, that He wants to "unveil" Himself to us, to invite us into a deep and intimate relationship with Him. Thus, for the children of God, Revelation is not just a communication of things that we could not otherwise have known, but rather an invitation to relationship, a revelation that invites a response. In order to respond appropriately to that invitation, we ought to become familiar with Revelation, so that we can better know the One who is calling us to a new life with Him.

Revelation is said to come to us in two ways, or through two channels, that is, through Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Sacred Tradition, that part of God's communication with us that came through the "handing on" of oral teaching in the Church. Because there is always the possibility of misunderstanding what somebody says or tries to communicate, and because it was very important for God that we understand clearly what He wanted us to know, He granted the Church the authority to interpret correctly what was written and taught, and this is one of the most fundamental roles and responsibilities of the Church. The Church's teaching office is referred to as the "Magisterium," a word that comes from a Latin word for "teacher." The bishops, who are all successors of the Apostles, with the Pope, who is the successor of St. Peter, make up the Magisterium, and help us to know and understand what God wants us to know. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture should not be seen as separate channels, but rather different modes of communicating the one message that God wanted to reveal. One way to consider the unity between the two is to speak of Sacred Tradition as the authoritative interpretation of Sacred Scripture by the Church throughout history. The Church teaches in Sacred Tradition what she has come to understand about what has been written in Sacred Scripture.

And so, we can confidently learn from the Church what God has revealed to us by studying what she teaches, but we also have access to the very word of God written in the Bible. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council spoke about this great gift when they wrote that, “in the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet His children, and talks with them.” (CCC 104) The Bible makes it possible for us to hear God’s voice, and that is why every disciple who is serious about deepening their relationship with Him, reads the Bible regularly, even daily, and contemplates the words in both their literal and spiritual senses. So important is the Bible for the life of the disciple, that the same Council Fathers “forcefully and specifically exhort(ed) all the Christian faithful... to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,’ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.” (CCC 133) The bishops want you to read the Bible, and so does Augustine – his conversion began when he famously heard “tolle lege”, take and read, and he responded and the study of Sacred Scripture remains core to Augustinian Spirituality to this day.

Revelation is God’s self-communication. He reveals both Himself and His plan, and He does this to invite all people into a life-changing relationship with Him. His Revelation comes to us through the two-fold channels of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, authentically interpreted by the Magisterium. We have access to God’s Revelation through the teaching of the Church and the Bible. Ultimately, Revelation is God’s invitation to you for a conversation that leads to friendship.