

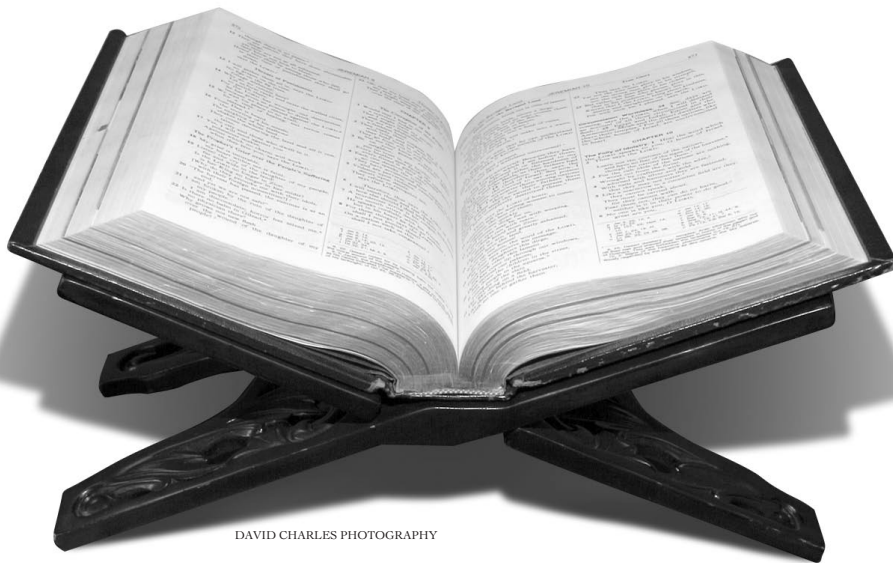
The Deposit of Faith

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. ~ 1 Timothy 6:20-21

GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF and his purposes regarding all human life abundantly clear. He has revealed those truths that we must know and believe in order to be what he created us to be. His Word has been delivered to us in written and oral form through human agents. As well, all of divine Revelation can be summed up and is personified in Jesus, since he is *“the way, and the truth, and the life”* (Jn 14:6) for us and *“no one comes to the Father, but by”* him (Jn 14:6; see also Jn 5:39). All that Jesus taught and did has been handed down to us in the unbroken line of apostolic tradition. This is in obedience to Jesus’ *“great commission”* to the eleven faithful apostles: *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’”* (Mt 28:18-20).

The sacred deposit of Revelation, then, is to be found in God’s Word as it is written in Sacred Scripture, preserved orally in Sacred Tradition, and guarded and authentically interpreted by those apostles and their successors. The living teaching office of the Church exercised by these men (the pope and bishops in communion with him) is called the Magisterium. The shepherds of the Church, immediately following their apostolic predecessors, have faithfully guarded and still teach the entire written and oral content of divine Revelation (the Christian message), as they are guided by the help of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul exhorts Timothy to *“[f]ollow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us”* (2 Tm 1:13-14). The deposit of the faith is this sacred deposit of Revelation left to the Church by Jesus Christ.

The deposit of faith is like a treasure which has been



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

“The deposit of faith is like a treasure which has been entrusted to the Church and from which the Church draws all her life and teaching.”

entrusted to the Church and from which the Church draws all her life and teaching. This treasure of God's Word is Jesus Christ, the Word who *"became flesh and dwelt among us"* (Jn 1:14), whose voice continues to reach us through the voice of the Church who authentically proclaims the truths of salvation revealed by him. Therefore, all the doctrines she proposes for belief are either contained in this deposit of faith or necessarily connected to it. The Church's formulation of these doctrines puts human words to the revealed truths of this living deposit of Revelation and helps us "to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more" (CCC 170).

Down through the centuries, the Church has faithfully guarded this rich deposit and kept it free from corruption and error. The faith is one and the same faith as that received by the apostles. There is no other Gospel or further revelation after Jesus Christ because he is the eternal Word and *"in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell"* (Col 1:19). The Church takes seriously the warning of Scripture concerning the preaching of a different Gospel: *"But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gal 1:8).

While no changes have occurred in the faith at the level of essentials, development and growth in our understanding of it has occurred necessarily. "Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church" (CCC 94).

The Church must seek to deepen her understanding of this heritage and be renewed by it so that, in turn, the message of the Gospel which she preaches can penetrate more deeply the human spirit while holding fast to the timeless truths contained in this sacred deposit.

Not only the passage of time but also diverse cultures and peoples make it necessary for the Church to express the richness of the faith in different ways. This is a sign of the Church's catholicity, which bears witness to the power of the Gospel to transform and inculturate all peoples while preaching the same message "in which one and

the same way of salvation appears throughout the whole world"¹ (CCC 174). For *"there is one body and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all"* (Eph 4:4-6).

(CCC 84-95, 170-175)



*Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well,
6th century ivory panel on bishop's chair in Ravenna, Italy*

***"All that Jesus taught and did
has been handed down to us in the
unbroken line of apostolic tradition."***

¹ St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres.* 5, 20, 1 from J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* 7/2, 1177 (Paris, 1857-1866)