

Revelation

by Donald Senior, CP

At the heart of Christian faith is the conviction that God speaks to us. While human beings can come to know the presence of God through natural reason, there is another reality known as Revelation. By Revelation we refer to God's unique and profound Self-communication through the Scriptures and Sacred Tradition. It is a Revelation that God initiates and that enables us to know God in a true and intimate manner. God, in other words, communicates God's own Self to us. God also offers us the grace to understand and respond to what is revealed.

At the heart of this divine Revelation is God's loving plan for humanity that we call Divine Providence. We believe that God's plan existed from all eternity. God intended that we humans would live together with God in love. This plan came to its fullest expression in Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

God's message is constant and unchanging. It is one of unconditional love. The Gospel of John summarizes this loving intent of God in words familiar to many of us. "For God so

loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16–17)

The Church teaches that God reveals God's Self to us in ways we can recognize. The chief means by which God communicates with us are the Sacred Scriptures and the Sacred Tradition of the Church.

God's communication comes to us in Sacred Scripture. In a profound and compelling way God reveals God's love for us through the long saga of the Old Testament. Here we begin with the story of the creation of the world and follow the journey of God's people through history. We hear of Abraham and Sarah, of David, of Isaiah, of Jeremiah and the other prophets. God's Revelation is continued in the New Testament where, beginning with John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, the life

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Donald Senior, CP, is Professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where he also serves as the school's president. Donald Senior is a member of the Passionist Congregation. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1967 and received his doctorate in New Testament studies from the University of Louvain. Father Senior has published extensively on biblical topics, with numerous books and articles for both scholarly and popular audiences. He is the recipient of the 1996 National Catholic Education Association's Bishop Loras Lane Award for outstanding service to Catholic education.

Even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

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of Jesus is told. Throughout the New Testament, the wonders of God's love are recorded and the early followers of Jesus share their faith.

God's communication comes to us as well in the Sacred Tradition of the Church. This Tradition is a fund of teaching and wisdom that began with the apostles. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the apostles reflected on the meaning of Christ and through their successors handed on this living legacy to all subsequent generations of the Church right into our time. When we speak of Sacred Tradition this way, we are not merely referring to customs or ways of doing things. We also use this term to imply the Church's growing and developing understanding of the mystery of God

as it is expressed in each generation and passed on to the next. People of every age can draw on their experience in the light of faith to grasp the implication of God's Revelation for their lives.

These two chief means of Revelation, Scripture and Tradition, are distinct from one another but not really separable or independent of one another. God's living Word to humanity is revealed through both. Taken together, they express the same reality.

Because we believe that Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's Revelation, we say that beyond the apostolic age there is no new public Revelation. The inspired words of Sacred Scripture and the Church's Tradition contain the whole of God's Revelation to us.



For Reflection



What points from this article added to your understanding of the meaning of Revelation?