

Preface

In his now famous Christmas Address to the Roman Curia delivered on December 22, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of two competing approaches to the Second Vatican Council; the appropriate one being based upon what he described as the “hermeneutic of renewal in continuity with the one subject Church the Lord has given us.”

“Hermeneutic” refers to an interpretive key; in other words, the Holy Father is essentially saying that the only authentically Catholic way of receiving the content of Vatican Council II is in a manner congruous with all that preceded it.

Over the years, the phrase, “hermeneutic of continuity,” has often been invoked by so-called “conservative” Catholics with respect to the conciliar text and its implementation, but the question that all too often goes unanswered is “Continuity with *what*, exactly?”

There is but one answer, and that is, “Continuity with sacred Tradition.”

This, however, leads to yet another critically important question, “What precisely is Tradition?”

The word “tradition” comes from the Latin, *tradere*, meaning *to transmit*, and so Tradition can be described as that which *transmits the faith that comes to us from the Apostles*.

Now, it’s critically important for us to realize that the faith that is being transmitted, this Tradition, is the same yesterday, today and always. As the “Oath Against Modernism” of Pope St. Pius X says of the Apostolic faith:

“I firmly hold... that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the Apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different and may never be understood in any other way.”

This calls to mind the mandate given to the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII, who implored the Council Fathers:

“Transmit the doctrine, purely... without any distortion.... in adherence to all of the teachings of the Church in their entirety, with preciseness... in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine... retaining the same meaning and message” (Opening Address to the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962).

In employing the phrase, “retaining the same meaning and message,” one might argue that the Holy Father was deliberately calling the Council Fathers’ attention to that very same “Oath,” which also states:

“I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the Apostles, through the orthodox Fathers, *in exactly the same meaning and always the same purport...*”

Every single one of the Council Fathers, as well as the pope himself, had solemnly pledged to uphold this Oath. Its language and its demands, therefore, would have been familiar to each of them.

Regardless of how well, or not, the Council upheld this obligation vis-à-vis the documents it produced is a moot point. What is beyond debate, as the witness of the past several decades attests, is that the text produced by the Council Fathers has often been leveraged in a way that is irreconcilable with the demands placed upon them, the resulting storm contributing greatly to the rough seas upon which the Barque of St. Peter has been tossed ever since.

The only way to right the ship, therefore, is to evaluate *all that the Council proposes* relative to sacred Tradition (*Traditio* in Latin, thus the name of this series), a task that is utterly impossible for a people who are ignorant of the sacred Magisterium of the centuries leading up to Vatican II.

Therein lies the purpose of the *Traditio Faith Formation Series*: To aid the children of the Church – both lay and ordained – in developing a fully Catholic worldview, founded upon a solid understanding of “the faith that comes to us from the Apostles,” in all of its immutable richness, the transmission of which throughout the course of the centuries is the very purpose of sacred Tradition.

How to approach the *Traditio Faith Formation Series*:

Prayer

It is critically important to make prayer an integral part of your journey into the “Magisterium of Tradition,” seeking the Lord’s grace for guidance along the way. In the present case, a prayer taken from the liturgy for the Feast of Christ the King can be found on Page 4. Get into the habit of offering this, or another prayer of your choosing, each and every time you enter these pages.

Introduction

Preceding the document to be explored (or individual lessons in the case of lengthier texts) is a brief overview that provides background information and insights that will aid in its exploration.

The Magisterial Text

The document being explored is reproduced herein as provided by the Holy See (unless otherwise noted), with the lengthier texts being presented in segments according to the content of individual lessons. Read this text slowly and prayerfully. Throughout, one will find “callouts” that draw the reader’s attention to key points for consideration. Participants may benefit from making their own notes in the margins as well.

Study Questions

Each lesson consists of a series of study questions that are designed to call attention to key teachings found in the text being examined. Oftentimes, participants will be asked to read from Sacred Scripture for more insight. This aids in helping us to interpret the authentic meaning of the text by the light of sacred Tradition.

NOTE: After most questions, a number will appear in brackets that corresponds to the applicable paragraph (or article) in the document being studied. This will allow participants to reference the relevant teaching with ease.

Suggested Responses

Following each lesson are suggested responses. The responses are not intended to be exhaustive; but rather to serve as guidance in helping participants gain insight into the text’s meaning and relevance. The suggested responses also aid facilitators in leading a study group. It is best to refrain from reading the suggested responses until after the questions have been answered. In all cases, be sure to review the suggested responses before moving on to the next lesson as they may contain important insights that deserve deeper consideration.



Calling of the Apostles, Ghirlandaio, Domenico (1449-1494), Sistine Chapel