

The image is a reproduction of Michelangelo's famous fresco, "The Creation of Adam," from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It depicts God on the right, reclining and pointing his right index finger toward Adam on the left, who is lying on his back with his right arm extended. The two fingers are just inches apart, creating a sense of tension and divine spark. God is surrounded by other figures, including the Virgin Mary and several angels, all looking towards Adam. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with some visible cracks.

Revelation: God Comes to Meet Man

Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn. 50-133.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn. 6-24.

Revelation Begins with Creation

Revelation starts with creation. (CCC, 288). Through creatures God manifests himself to people of all times, making his goodness & perfections known. Among all creatures the human being, the image & likeness of God, is the creature that most fully reveals Him.

By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works.

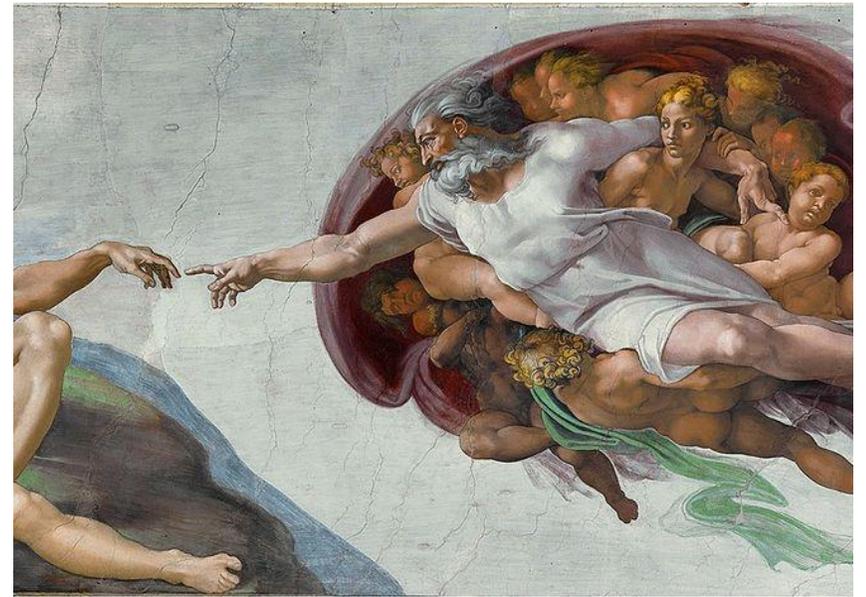
But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself & given himself to man. (CCC, 50)



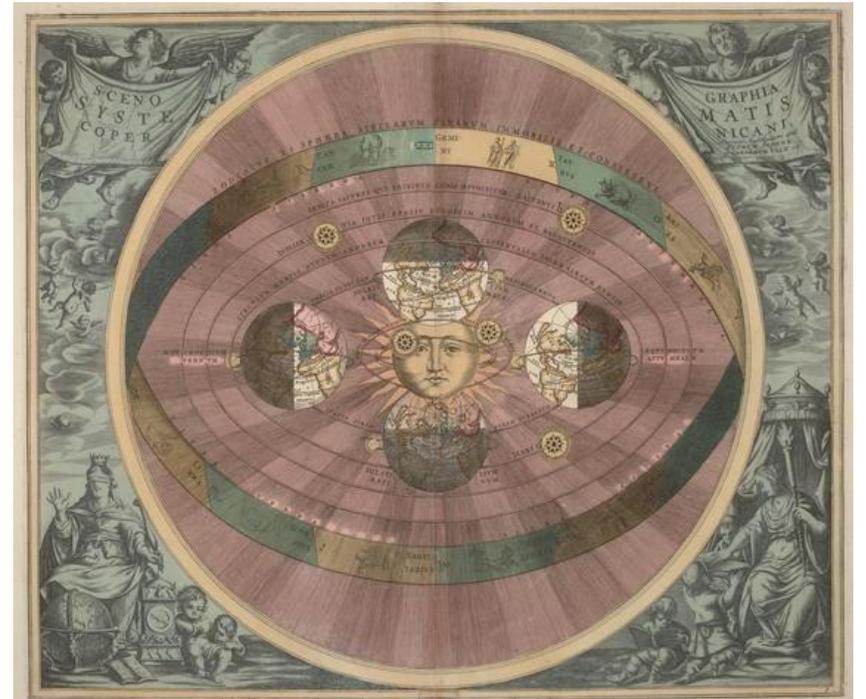
What does God reveal?

God reveals Himself & His plan of salvation, preparing the world for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, so that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, & thus become sharers in the divine nature. (CCC, 51)

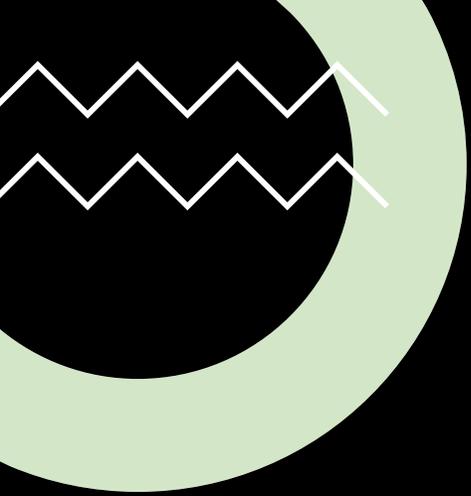
The principal subject matter of divine Revelation is not abstract truths about the world & mankind, but rather God's self-revelation of the mystery of his own personal life & his invitation to share in it.



Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, 1511.



Andreas Cellarius, 'Heliocentric universe', *Harmonia Macrocosmica*, 1660. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Why does God reveal?

From the fullness of his love, God communicates his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son.

By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity. (CCC, 52).



The Miraculous Catch of Fish, Raphael, 1515.





Abraham and Sarah, Orthodox Icon.

How Does God Reveal?

God reveals Himself

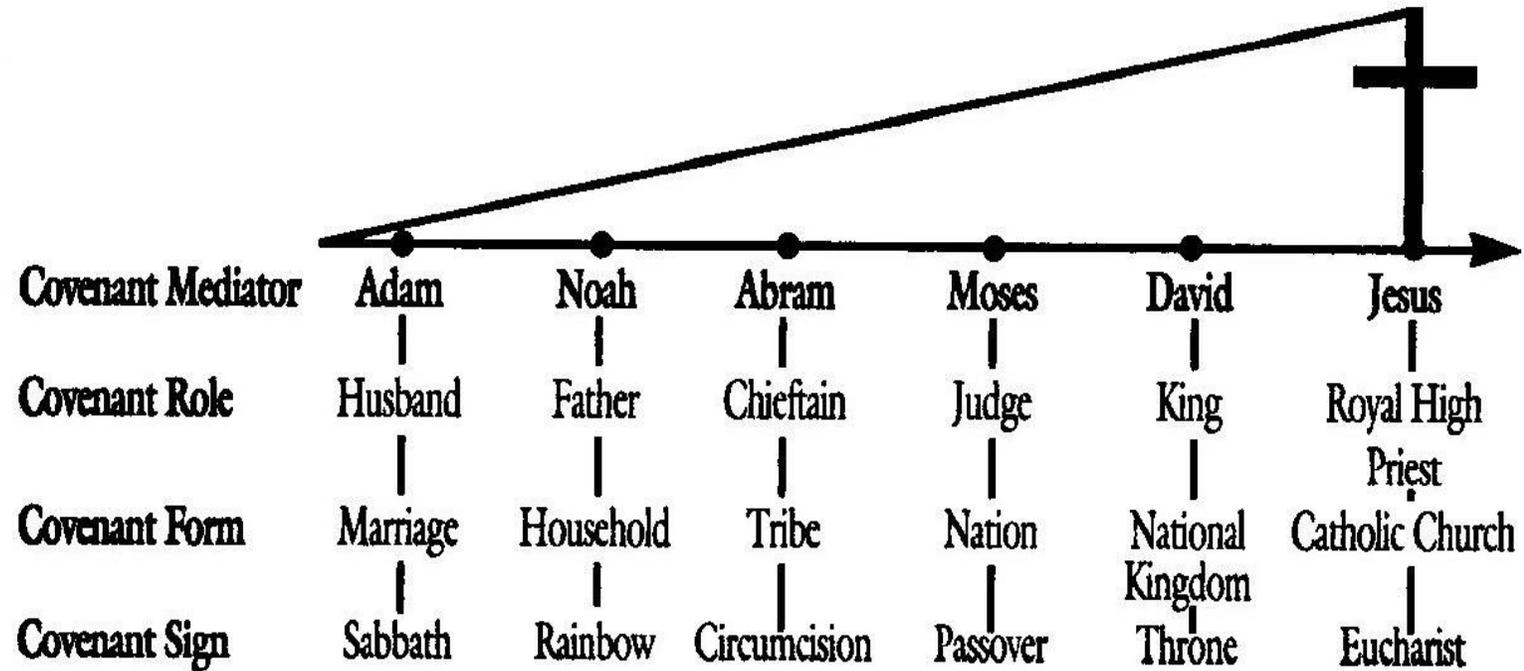
- in time
- in deeds & words
- forming & guiding a people to receive Revelation

“The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously "by deeds & words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" & shed light on each another.

God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person & mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.” (CCC, 53)

‘History of Salvation’ & the stages of Revelation (CCC, 54-65)

God Gradually Reveals His Plan of Loving Goodness: The Stages of Revelation



- **CREATION:** God provides evidence of himself in creation.
- God spoke to Adam and Eve
- After the Fall, God promised them salvation (cf. *Gen 3:15*) and offered them his covenant.
- **NOAH:** God made an everlasting covenant with Noah & with all living beings (cf. *Gen 9:16*). It remains in force as long as the world lasts.
- **ABRAHAM:** God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants.
- **MOSES:** By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.
- **JESUS CHRIST:** God revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.



Revelation Culminates in Christ

The history of salvation points to Christ. The prophets speak clearly about the promised Messiah. They announce the new covenant, spiritual & eternal, to be written on the hearts of believers. Christ will reveal it with the beatitudes & all his teachings.

Jesus Christ is simultaneously the mediator & the fullness of Revelation. He is both the Revealer & the Revelation, as the Word of God made flesh. God, in his Word, has said everything & in a definitive way.

There will be no further Revelation

The New Covenant is definitive & will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected.

“Private” revelations: do *not* belong to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Some have been recognized by the Church. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept “revelations” that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such “revelations”.

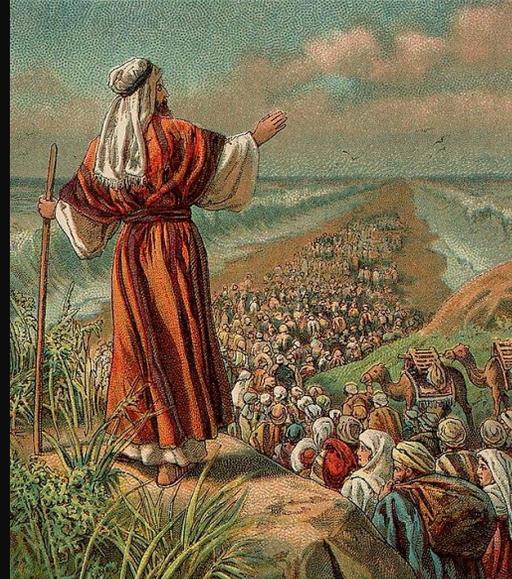
Growth in Understanding the Faith

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

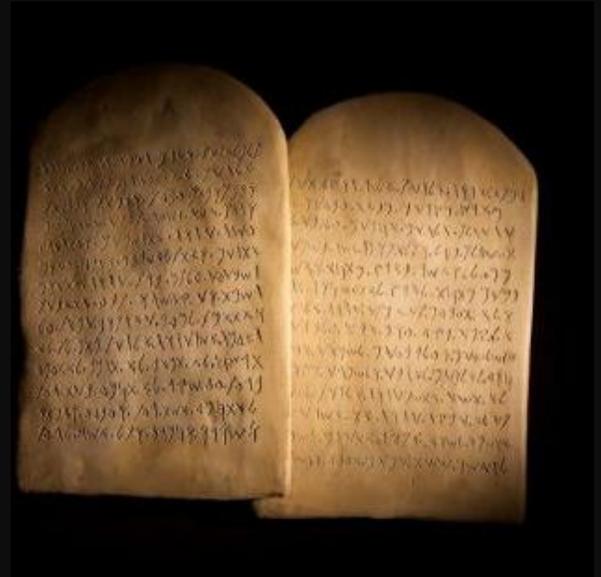
Words & Deeds

Divine Revelation is carried out by deeds & words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" & shed light on each other. (CCC, 53). Examples?

In addition to the works & external signs by which he reveals himself, God grants the interior impulse of his grace to enable us to adhere wholeheartedly to the truths revealed.



Exodus from Egypt, Providence Lithograph Company, 1907. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Transmission of Divine Revelation: Tradition & Sacred Scripture

God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, & be transmitted to all generations. (CCC, 74)

Apostolic Tradition

Christ commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they handed on the Gospel in two ways:

- *Orally*, by their preaching, their example, & the institutions they established.
- *In writing*, by those apostles & men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, put the message of salvation in writing. (CCC, 75-6)





Transmission of Divine Revelation: Tradition & Sacred Scripture

Continued in Apostolic Succession

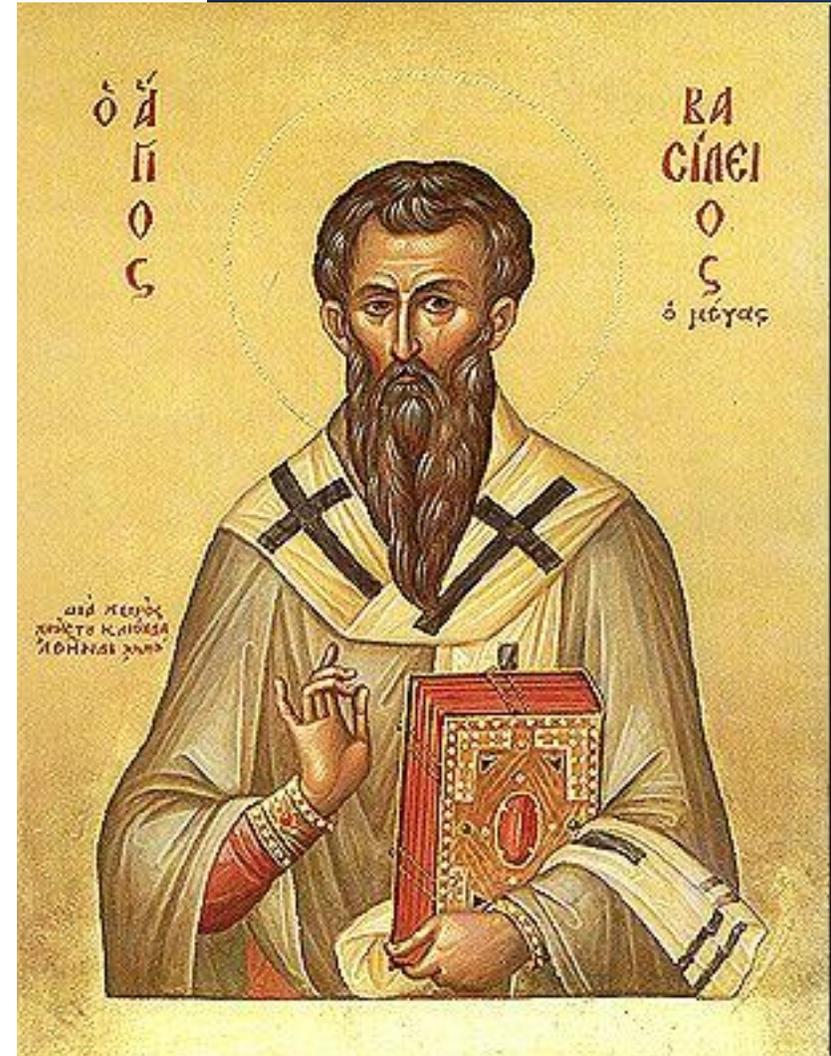
- To preserve & pass on the full & living Gospel in the Church, the apostles left successors (bishops), passing on their own position of teaching authority. The apostolic preaching was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.
- This *living transmission*, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called **Tradition**. It is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, the Church, in her doctrine, life & worship, transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes. (CCC, 77-8)

Fathers of the Church

The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice & life of the Church, in her belief & her prayer.

Christian teachers & writers of the first centuries whose explanations of the Faith & personal holiness are a witness to the Tradition of the Church.

- 1) Writers/teachers
 - 2) From first centuries
 - 3) Doctrinal orthodoxy
 - 4) Holiness of life
 - 5) Witness of the tradition of the Church
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- “Apostolic Fathers” are the first fathers who personally knew the Apostles (eg Sts Clement & Ignatius)
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- Patristics – the study of their writings



Revelation: One Source, Two Modes of Transmission

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together & communicate with one another. They flow out from the same divine source & move toward the same goal.

Sacred Scripture: the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."

Sacred Tradition: transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching."

The Church does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence."

'Tradition' v 'traditions'



The Magisterium

- **Guardian and authorized interpreter of Revelation**
- The task of giving an authentic **interpretation** of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church.
- The Church's "living teaching office," made up of the bishops in communion with St. Peter's successor, the bishop of Rome, is a service rendered to the word of God and has as its aim the salvation of souls.
- The Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devoutly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.
- The teachings of the Church's Magisterium are the most important place where there the apostolic Tradition is found.



St Peter's Basilica, Rome.



The Magisterium of the Church

- The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone.
- Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.
- The Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it.
- At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it
 - listens to this devotedly,
 - guards it with dedication and
 - expounds it faithfully.
- All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.
- Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: "He who hears you, hears me", the faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.



Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church constitute, therefore, a certain unity, such that no one of the three can exist on its own.



The foundation of this unity is the Holy Spirit, Author of Sacred Scripture, guide of the Magisterium, which he assists with his charisms.



The Protestant Reformation: the principle of *sola scriptura*, leaving scriptural interpretation in the hands of individual believers. This position has given rise to the multiplicity of Protestant denominations.



Every Scripture text requires a context, specifically a tradition, from which it is born and in which it is read and interpreted.



"Fundamentalism" separates Scripture from Tradition and the Magisterium, seeking to maintain a unity of interpretation by applying *only* the literal sense (see CCC 108).