

## Chaplain's Bulletin September 1, 2024



Dear Folks,

Our Gospel for today from Mark 7 tells of Jesus clashing with the Pharisees about God's teaching and their traditions (See vv. 1-23 for the whole story). We see, "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts... You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition (see Mark 7:7-8)."

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum) says: "[T]here exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. ... Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore, both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. ... Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church (DV 9,10)."

Some have claimed that the Catholic Church is doing what the Pharisees were doing with regard to tradition. We want to look deeper into the issue. Both Catholics and Protestants have the tradition of calling the Bible "The Word of God" but the Bible tells us the first meaning of the term is Jesus Himself (John 1:1). Jesus is condemning corrupt tradition, and the word "tradition" means "something handed down (Greek paradosis, verb form paradidomi)." We see, for example St. Paul tells people to hold to the traditions they received (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15; verb form 1 Corinthians 15:3).

To understand the Catholic Church's thoughts about tradition, consider: it doesn't make sense to us that God would reveal the fullness of truth and then let it get lost. It doesn't make sense to us that God would protect and preserve the truth in the Church up to a certain point in history and then stop. Hence, we have trouble with the notion that after the Bible was written, the Church as a whole misunderstood it for centuries and centuries until fifteen hundred years later someone got it right. What the Church has taught, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for many generations carries great weight. We must be aware that we can be manipulated by the world around us, and the testimony of generations of Christians is a vital counterweight.

Some people claim all they need is the Bible, however, many groups who make that claim teach contradictory things, and I don't see any limit to those contradictions. When I was in college, I met a group called Students for New Testament Restoration. They held that God has given us the Bible to teach us the truth, so we should be able to read the Bible and reliably find and know the truth, otherwise we are saying that God did a poor job writing it. Therefore, after they read the Bible and understood what it meant, everyone who disagreed with them was just being dishonest. They didn't make a lot of friends, but I admired the consistency of their logic.

God clearly allows messy disagreements, but when it threatens to tear the Church apart and have the Gospel get lost the leaders of the Church, appointed by Christ, or their successors, resolve it (see Acts 15).

It is a constant task to stay faithful to the Gospel revealed in Jesus, passed down in the Church under the protection of the Holy Spirit. As usual, God's grace does not make it easy but makes it possible.

Blessings,  
Fr. Jim