



## ***Summary of Dei Verbum – Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation***

By: Deacon Ed Sheffer

The difficult issue for the Vatican Two fathers, with laying out this document, rested in resolving the relationship of Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and reconciling that there was no error of God's self-revelation to the world. The fathers made it clear in this document that God reveals truth through Scripture and the Church. The primary question raised by Vatican Two fathers concerning Divine Revelation was: *How does God speak to us and how do we know it is God?* The ultimate purpose of this document is to help people in search of truth to strengthen their faith. It is in hearing the message of Christ that people believe, and in believing, we hope, and through hope, we learn to love more perfectly. We Catholics believe that Divine Revelation is the *Word of God* expressed in the words of man. We have access to God through Scripture and that helps us to share in God's nature. The Gospel would have no relevance and we would have no business centering ourselves around the Bible if it were not God's Word.

### **Chapter One: *Divine Revelation Itself***

God wants us to know His love for us. Revelation is not just words about God; it is a living experience of God. God does not just reveal in *Word* how best we should live, but God reveals himself as well. As revelation unfolds; we become more aware of how God is ultimately over all things and God is complete in Himself. In coming to know more what God is like, we come to understand the purpose for our human existence. Besides dying to save us, Jesus makes known our human connection to God. Jesus is both message and messenger. Jesus reveals that God has called us to Himself and promises that salvation will ultimately lead to divine closeness. The Father sent the Son so he could tell us about the inner life of God. Jesus is not only the *Word made flesh*; he leads us to eternal life. Jesus is revelation in its completeness. There is no greater or necessary revelation than this. All things are made full in Jesus. The Holy Spirit was sent to bring us to completion. The Holy Spirit provides us with God's grace so God's revelation takes root.

### **Chapter Two: *The Transmission***

In the very early Church they preached and taught orally. They set an example by the way they lived. In time it became necessary to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down God's message. The Apostles handed on the authority to teach to the bishops who took their places. Through the unending line of succession the bishops are to secure and protect the *Word of God* and to see that it is kept intact to the end of time. The *Word* is the gift of *faith*, freely given by God, and faith develops through the Holy Spirit. Development of faith happens when we study, contemplate and put belief into action. This is why sacred Scripture and Church Tradition are closely connected and validly important to the growth of one's faith. Scripture is the *Word of God – The Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. Sacred Tradition is the *Word of God* passed

on to us in various forms: Liturgy, prayers, and the teachings of the Apostles and their successors. The bishops are the Church's official teachers. The word *Magisterium* means official teacher. The bishops are charged with the duty to hand on the *Word of God* handed on to them. The *Magisterium* is not superior to the *Word of God*, but is its servant. The text of the Bible is sovereign in the Catholic Church. Jesus came to reveal the truths and commission all of us to preach these truths. Some are ordained to preach what they have read, come to believe, and put into practice, but most preach what they come to know about Scripture by how they reveal Christ in the way they live in their family and in the world. We all make up the Church and we all have a role to play in communicating God's *Word*.

### **Chapter Three: Divine Inspiration and Interpretation**

Those chosen wrote down words inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit revealed what God desired to be written. None of the Scripture writers were robbed of human intelligence or knowledge, but in a special way their human characteristics, including their limitations, were used to deliver God's message faithfully without error. Scripture is without error in the sense that it is for our salvation, not in the sense of scientific or historical accuracy. Interpretation of Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit, too. Interpretation requires insight into historical analysis, literary analysis, understanding tradition, human sciences, and comprehending the purpose the text served to its initial audience. Interpretation must be about faithfulness to true revelation if it is to bear the proper fruit. The Bible is a text inspired by God which is entrusted to the Church for the nurturing of faith and guiding one's life.

### **Chapter Four: The Old Testament**

Israel was chosen by God to establish a covenant of love with humankind. They were chosen to experience divine love and through this experience become an example for all nations. The Old Testament remains significant because it communicates how God remained active in the history of mankind and because it reveals the plan of God to provide Jesus. The Old Testament feeds us a wealth of prayers and insight into the teachings of God. The mystery of salvation is in the midst of the Old Testament, and so has enduring value.

### **Chapter Five: The New Testament**

The Gospel writers told the story of Jesus in a way that the present Church in their time and place would understand the truth of salvation. In the New Testament salvation is completely released. Christ brings order to the world by establishing the reign of God on earth. Jesus reveals the Father and completes God's plan. The four Gospels are the foremost teachings in Scripture. They contain the foundation of our faith. The Gospels provide the framework for the Church. They teach us how our lives are meant to be lived. The Gospels contain the story of salvation and the truths about Jesus Christ.

### ***Chapter Six: Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church***

Eucharist and Scripture are both celebrated in our Liturgy. Christ is delivered and consumed at *the one table of God's Word and Body*. The *Word of God* supports the Church and strengthens it. The true story of Theology rests in Scripture. We must come to know Scripture more and

more, for through Scripture we meet Christ. To be uninformed of Scripture is to lack serious knowledge of Jesus and who we are to become. The *Word of God* is truth that lasts forever. Everyone is to have access to the *Word of God*. Although it is possible for people to come to know God by contemplating the created world, with Scripture we can respond much more appropriately to God's call.

Yes, *revelation is complete in Jesus*, but this does not mean we are not meant to experience God in our life. God is met in many dimensions of life, in the good and the bad, in the joy and in the suffering. True faith requires there be a response to *Divine Revelation*.

I am extremely humbled to serve God's *Word*. As an Ordained Deacon, I am officially *The Herald of the Gospel*. It is with gratefulness and awe that I seek to protect the truthfulness of the *Word of God*. One of my responsibilities as a deacon is to lead us in signing ourselves with the cross before the Gospel is proclaimed. I would like to offer you what I contemplate as I sign myself. As I sign my forehead, I recall my desire to comprehend the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. As I sign my lips, I remind myself it is not enough for me alone to understand God's *Word*. God's love must be shared. As I sign my heart, I remember that the message of the Gospel bears no fruit unless I live the Gospel.

*May the words of the Gospel wipe away our sins!*