

The Universal Desire for God

CCC 27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 1,1,1:PL 32)

CCC 31 These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of "converging and convincing arguments", which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These "ways" of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person.

Through Creation –

CCC 32 The *world*: starting from 1) movement, 2) becoming, 3) contingency, and 4) the world's order and 5) beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

“The Heavens declare the Glory of God.” – Ps 19:2

“Ever since the creation of the World, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made” – Rom 1:20

Through Human Person –

CCC 33 With his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material",⁹ can have its origin only in God.

CCC 46 When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything.

Divine Revelation – Takes us to the next level of knowing God and allows us to enter into a personal relationship with him.

Apostolic Tradition – Transmission of Good News by Apostles and passed on to their successors.

CCC 76 In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:

- *orally* "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received - whether from

the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit";³³

- *in writing* "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing".³⁴

Dei Verbum 9. Hence there 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. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. 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. (6)

Divine Revelation is both incremental and cumulative. In other words, God unveiled his plan of Salvation slowly across time and built upon itself and culminated in his Son, Jesus, the Word of God. As the Letter to the Hebrews notes, "1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son," (Heb 1:1-2) The unity of the Old and New Testament flows from the revealed unity of God's loving plan to save us.

Sacred Scripture should be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church according to 3 Criteria: **1.** It must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole Scripture; **2.** It must be read within the living Tradition of the Church; **3.** It must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves. (Compendium #19)

Public Revelation	Private Revelation
Universal and True for all Time for all peoples	Revealed to a specific person
Have to accept for faith (exp. Creed, Tradition, Scripture)	Whole Church does not have to accept
God guides the writing process (Holy Spirit, Magisterium)	1. Must agree to Public Revelation 2. Nourishes and inspires spiritual life

The Canon of Scripture –

CCC **120** It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.⁹⁰ This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.⁹¹

The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther,

1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, *the Song of Songs*, *the Wisdom of Solomon*, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

The New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, and Revelation (the Apocalypse).

The canon was fixed within the first few centuries of the Church (Council of Rome 382). Due to challenges by others regarding the inspiration of some books, the Council of Trent, in 1546, declared that all the books in both the Old and New Testament were inspired in their entirety. The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) and Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) confirmed this declaration. The seven books may be identified as Deuterocanonical Books or the Apocrypha in non-Catholic Bibles.

Scripture Verses

¹⁴ “For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news,^[h] so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters,^[i] stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.” (2 Thes 2:15)

“I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.” (1 Cor 11:2)

“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet 1:20-21)

Church Fathers

“If you believe what you like in the Gospels, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.” – St. Augustine.

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is Ignorance of Christ.” – St. Jerome

Key takeaways –

- Jesus Christ, the fullness of Revelation, entrusted his mission to the Apostles. They transmitted Christ’s Gospel through their witness, preaching, and writing – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit – meant for all peoples until Christ comes in glory.
- Divine Revelation is transmitted through Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture which flow from the same divine wellspring and work together in unity toward the same goal.
- The Church in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generations all that she herself is, all that she believes” DV 8 This is what is meant by Tradition.

- Because of the divine gift of faith, God's people as a whole never ceases to receive and reflect on the gift of Divine Revelation.
- The teaching office of the Church and Magisterium – that is the pope and bishops in communion with him – has the task of authoritatively interpreting the Word of God, contained in Scripture and transmitted by Sacred Tradition.
- Sacred Scripture is inspired by God and truly contains the Word of God. This action is called Inspiration.
- God is the author of Sacred Scripture, inspiring the Human authors acting in and through them. Thus, God ensured that the authors taught divine and saving truth without error.
- The Catholic Church accepts and venerates as inspired the 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. The unity of the Old and New Testament flows from the revealed unity of God's loving plan to save us.
- Our response to God's Revelation is faith, by which we surrender our whole selves to him.

(US Catholic Catechism for Adults p. 31-32)

Key Terminology – taken from (Catholic Bible Dictionary, Scott Hahn, 2009)

Inspiration – Divine authorship of the Bible in which the Holy Spirit acted in and through the Bible's Human authors, moving them to write what God wished them to communicate in written form. (p.381)

Magisterium – Teaching office of the Church composed of the Pope in union with the College of Bishops (those successors to the apostolic witnesses) (p.776)

Divine (Supernatural) Revelation – All that God makes known about himself and his will that is unknowable and undiscoverable by human reason alone. (p. 775)

Tradition – mainly the unwritten expression of divine faith embodied in the Church's liturgy and living institutions (p.776)

Scripture – the written expression of revelation as preserved in the inspired books of the Bible (p.776)

Deposit of Faith – word of God both Scripture and Tradition committed to the Church as a whole, the People of God, guided by the Magisterium to be passed on from generation to generation. (p.776)

We will now consider each of these Five Ways:

1. **The argument from motion (movement).** It is observable in the world that anything that is in motion must have been moved, or set in motion, by something else. Like falling dominoes or a moving train, the thing that moved the first object must also have been moved by something else, and so on. This sequence of movers, however, cannot go backward infinitely in time; there had to have been something or someone to initiate the very first move. That *First Mover* is God.

2. **The argument from causes (becoming).** This is somewhat similar to the First Mover argument. It is observable in the world that nothing causes itself to be; everything in existence is caused by something else. Like a tree that grew from a seed must have come from another tree. This sequence of causes cannot go backward infinitely in time; there had to have been something or someone to cause the very first thing to exist. That *First Cause* is God.

3. **The argument from possibility and necessity (contingency).** Everything in nature is possible, or contingent; that is, it can either be or not be, depending on other causes. For example, at one time your chair did not exist, and at some point in the future, your chair will cease to exist. If at one time nothing existed, then nothing could ever have come to exist unless there is one being who is necessary—who must exist, who by necessity has always existed. That *Necessary Being* is God.

4. **The argument from degrees of perfection (beauty).** Some things are more perfect than others—truer or better, for example. But these things can be said to be more true or more good only insofar as they resemble that which is most true and most good. To recognize degrees of goodness, there must be an ultimate good, someone or something who is absolutely perfect. That *Perfect Being* is God.

5. **The argument from governance (order).** Events that happen by chance occur randomly, but events that are ordered by intelligence fit into regular patterns and form comprehensive wholes. When, therefore, objects that lack intelligence—for example, natural bodies such as the sun, moon, and stars—appear to behave in intelligible patterns, this regularity cannot

be by chance but must be the result of governance by some absolutely intelligent being. That *Absolute Intelligence* is God.

St. Thomas elucidated this Fifth Way thus:

We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for some purpose, which fact is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their purpose. Whatever lacks intelligence cannot fulfill some purpose unless it be directed by some being endowed with intelligence and knowledge: as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are ordained toward a definite purpose; and this being we call God. (5Th, I, 2, 3)

St. Thomas developed his proofs of God's existence nearly 800 years ago, long before the existence of the modern scientific method, but his arguments still apply in the twenty-first century. It is still true that an object in motion must be set in motion by something else; it is an elementary and observable law of physics. It is also plainly evident that nobody can create matter out of nothing. When, for example, a sculptor "creates" a statue, he or she begins with materials that already exist such as marble or clay.

Similarly, a child is conceived as a fertilized ovum, the union of the father's sperm and the mother's egg. That father and mother were likewise conceived from their own parents, and those parents from their own parents, and so on in a seemingly endless line. Yet there cannot be an infinite regression: there had to be a set of "first parents" who themselves were not brought into existence according to the same manner, whose matter, form, and function were created directly by God.

The same is true of the universe as a whole. Most astronomers and cosmologists today theorize the universe began with a "big bang," a cosmic explosion that sent matter flying in all directions—that matter, over billions of years, cooled and coalesced to form galaxies, stars, and planets. That may well be the case. The more fundamental question, however, is what caused the big bang. How did this primordial matter—the very molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles that make up everything in the universe—come into being?

The matter of the universe must have been created by someone or something that is infinite and uncreated. The big bang also must ultimately have been set in motion by another being that is itself