Sacred Tradition and Scripture

RCIA
September 26, 2013
As Catholics we believe in two sources of Divine Revelation:

- Tradition
- Scripture
Tradition is information or beliefs that are handed down or passed along from one generation to another

Oral

Our Christian Tradition dates back to the Apostles and Evangelists who spread the Good News of Jesus

Judeo-Christian Tradition
Martin Luther

Eve of All Saints Day 1517

Wittenberg, Germany
Sola Scriptura

The Bible:

The sole rule of faith

Everything that one needs to be saved and nothing needs to be added

The whole Christian truth is found in its pages
Catholic Tradition

The true rule of faith is Scripture and Tradition, as manifested in the living, teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the Apostles plus the authority to interpret Scripture rightly. (CCC)
From this Sacred Tradition flows the *Sacred Scriptures* and the *teaching authority of the Church* that protects the Church from error and protects us from the misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures.
Catholic Bible

Canon

Not

Cannon
The Canon of the books of the Bible

Authoritative, infallible list

Divinely revealed or inspired

A canon distinguishes the revealed and divine from the not revealed and human
The Bible

- No Canon of Scripture in the Early Church
- The Bible is the book of the Church
- The Church did not create the canon
- Scriptures are fully human and fully divine
First accepted as an official canon in the 4th Century (393 AD Council of Hippo)

This was clarified/supported by the Council of Carthage in 397 AD

Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)

New Testament (Christian Scriptures)
Christian Scriptures

General agreement by all Christians

27 books

Gospels

Acts of the Apostles

Letters or Epistles

Book of Revelation
Hebrew Scriptures

Early Christians and Catholics accept 46 books as canonical.

The Jewish scriptures accept 39 books.

Since Martin Luther in the 16th century most Protestants accept 39 books.
Why the Difference?

Protocanon – 39 books

Deuterocanon - Second Canon

Apocrypha (Hidden) - Not Divinely inspired
Deuterocanon

Tobit
Judith
1&2 Maccabees
Wisdom
Sirach
Baruch

Esther: additional 107 verses
Daniel: stories of Susanna, Bel, and the Dragon
Where did these books originate and why are they included in the Catholic Bible?
Following the Babylonian exile the Jewish people were dispersed throughout the regions of the Mediterranean Diaspora.

In the 3rd century BC, more Jews living in Alexandria than Palestine.

These Jews were Greek speaking and there was a concern that the Hebrew language with its scriptures would be lost.
Septuagint  LXX

Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures  (250 – 150 BC)

History of the Septuagint
Ptolemy
70/72 scholars… cloistered locations… 70/72 days   Identical translations… true to original Hebrew Scriptures

Scholars feel this is a myth
Translation of Septuagint probably took several decades

Concern that the Hebrew language would be lost and with it the cultic/religious practices

Greek was the language of the Mediterranean at that time. It was the language of commerce and the language of the early Church.

By translating the scriptures into Greek the Law would be preserved as would the cultic/temple services.
Deuterocanon and Septuagint

The Septuagint included the 7 books that we Catholics now refer to as the Deuterocanon.

During the time of Jesus the Septuagint was widely used in Palestine as was the Palestinian canon written in Hebrew and Aramaic.
Old Testament Canon

The early Christians chose the Septuagint as their translation of the Hebrew scriptures because it was the translation they were most accustomed to using and it was the version used by most Greek-speaking Jews at that time.
Development of the Old Testament Canon

1000-50 BC: The Old Testament (hereafter "OT") books are written. *

C. 200 BC: Rabbis translate the OT from Hebrew to Greek, a translation called the "Septuagint" (abbreviation: "LXX"). The LXX ultimately includes 46 books.

AD 30-100: Christians use the LXX as their scriptures. This upsets the Jews. **

C. AD 100: So Jewish rabbis meet at the Council of Jamnia and decide to include in their canon only 39 books, since only these can be found in Hebrew. ***

C. AD 400: Jerome translates the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin (called the "Vulgate"). He knows that the Jews have only 39 books, and he wants to limit the OT to these; the 7 he would leave out (Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach [or "Ecclesiasticus"], and Baruch—he calls "apocrypha," that is, "hidden books." But Pope Damasus wants all 46 traditionally-used books included in the OT, so the Vulgate has 46.

AD 1536: Luther translates the Bible from Hebrew and Greek to German. He assumes that, since Jews wrote the Old Testament, theirs is the correct canon; he puts the extra 7 books in an appendix that he calls the "Apocrypha." ****

AD 1546: The Catholic Council of Trent reaffirms the canonicity of all 46 books.
Hebrew Scriptures

Law – Torah or Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Numbers
Leviticus
Deuteronomy

Prophets – Nebi’im

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Baruch
Ezekiel
Daniel

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah

Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
Hebrew Scriptures

Writings – Ketub’im

Historical Books
Joshua, Judges
Kings and Chronicles
Ezra, Nehemiah, Judith, Esther
Maccabees

Wisdom Books
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes,
Sirach, Wisdom
Scripture and Tradition

Our belief in the Sacred Tradition does not diminish our reverence and veneration of the scriptures.

Because the Old and New Testament Scriptures are the Divinely-revealed written Word of God, Catholics venerate the Scriptures as they venerate the Lord's body.
Sacred Tradition

What do we mean by Sacred Tradition or Apostolic Tradition?
From the beginning of Christianity, the teaching of Jesus’ apostles was the most reliable source of truth about him.

At first the teaching of the Apostles was passed on by word of mouth, from believer to believer, community to community.

This passing on of the Good News of Jesus Christ by word of mouth is called “oral tradition.”
Today when we say “Tradition”, many people think we are speaking of things like holy cards, the Latin Mass, nuns in habits, and cantankerous old priests telling you what you can’t do.

But these are memories of culture, not faith; they are matters of custom and have nothing to do with Tradition.

We need to distinguish between Tradition and traditions.

Tradition is the living and lived faith of the Church.
Big “T” versus Little “t”

The term does not refer to legends or mythological accounts, nor does it encompass transitory customs or practices which may change, as circumstances warrant, such as styles of priestly dress, particular forms of devotion, or even liturgical rubrics. These are traditions with a little “t”

To be Sacred Tradition it cannot be rejected or lost without an essential distortion of the Gospel.
Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture

The Church doesn’t hold any truth on the basis of scripture alone but she doesn’t hold any truth on the basis of Tradition without scripture either.

You can’t take one without the other.

Sacred Tradition is the only source of information about fundamentally important ideas like the Holy Trinity or Marian Doctrine, which isn’t explicit in the Bible.
With the death of the last apostle the revelation given by Christ and the Holy Spirit is complete.

Nothing can be added to the deposit of revelation and nothing can be taken away.

But even though Tradition can’t change, our knowledge of it can grow.

Our understanding of it grows steadily because Tradition unfolds as the Church faces new situations.
Dei Verbum

Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, committed to the Church... For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.

So although the Church recognizes 2 sources we see them as one directed toward one goal, the salvation of souls...
Sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ... 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.

It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church... are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.
Dei Verbum – Tradition and Scripture

Tradition comes before, during and after the writing of Sacred Scripture

In the wider meaning of the word, Tradition refers to the whole process by which the Church “hands on” its faith to each new generation

This handing on occurs through

- Preaching
- Catechesis
- Teaching
- Bible
- Doctrines
- Devotions
Additional resources

New American Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

www.usccb.org (US Conference of Catholic Bishops)

www.vatican.va (Vatican)

www.catholic.org (Catholic online)