



Sacred Scripture
in the Life of the Church

Dei Verbum (Word of God)



Introduction and Summary



Reference

The Vatican II (1962-1965) document

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine
Revelation

Dei Verbum (the Word of God)



Introduction

- Officially promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965.
- It consists of 26 articles, divided into an Introduction and six Chapters

Summary of the Introduction and six chapters



- Revelation is referred to as “the Word of God”.
- The attitude of the Council towards the Word of God is “to hear” and “to proclaim” it.
- Vatican II aims to continue the work undertaken by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and Vatican I (1869-1870).



Chapter I: Revelation in Itself

- Revelation is an initiative of God, coming from his goodness and wisdom.
- What God reveals **is himself** and **his plan of salvation** for humankind.



- The plan of salvation is that, through Christ and in his Holy Spirit, human beings can approach the Father and share in the divine nature.



- By revelation, the invisible God speaks to humankind and invites them to a relationship with him.
- God's revelation is effected by **words** and **deeds** (events), both intimately bound together.



- The words and deeds of God are manifested in the history of salvation
- Christ is both the mediator and fullness of all revelation.



- Our response to revelation is “the obedience of faith”; that is, a total and free commitment to God.
- Faith is both an assent and a gift of God.
- There are truths concerning God that can be known by the light of human reason .



Chapter II: The Transmission of Divine Revelation

God wills that his revelation remains in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations.



- Christ, in whom is the fulfillment of all revelation, handed on His gospel (revelation) to the Apostles who, in turn, handed on the gospel to their successors, the bishops.



- Whatever has been handed down from the Apostles, expressed in the teaching, life and worship of the Church to help the People of God live a holy life and grow in faith, is referred to as *Sacred Tradition*.



- This Sacred Tradition is dynamic; in the sense that there is a growth in the understanding of what is handed on from the Apostles.



Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures are intimately bound together:

- *Sacred Scriptures* is the Word of God set down in writing, while ...
- *Sacred Tradition* preserves the Word of God and transmits it.



Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures form *one single deposit* of the Word of God entrusted to the *whole* Church, bishops and faithful together.



The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God whether in its written form (Sacred Scriptures) or in Sacred Tradition is entrusted only to those charged with the Church's ongoing teaching function (Magisterium).



- This teaching function (Magisterium) is not above the Word of God but at its service.
- *Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scriptures* and *Magisterium* are so connected and associated that one does not stand without the others but all together.



Chapter III: The Divine Inspiration of Sacred Scriptures and its Interpretation

All the books of the Old and New Testaments, in their entirety and with all their parts, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.



- In the process of composition of Sacred Scriptures, God employed human authors who used their own powers and faculties and yet were directed by him.
- So Sacred Scripture is essentially the Word of God in human language.



- Sacred Scriptures teach firmly, faithfully and without error the truths that God wishes to convey.
- To interpret Sacred Scriptures, we must carefully investigate the meaning the biblical writers had in mind.



- To get to the meaning of the biblical writers, attention must be paid to *literary genres*, among others.



- Sacred Scriptures must also be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit in whom it was written, considering the unity of the whole of Scriptures, the living tradition of the Church and the perspective of faith.



Chapter IV: The Old Testament

God's plan and pattern of salvation, as experienced by the people of Israel, is recounted by the biblical writers in the Old Testament.



- The plan and pattern of the Old Testament was above all directed towards the coming of Christ, the universal redeemer, and of the messianic kingdom.



- The books of the Old Testament were written under divine inspiration and ought to be accepted by Christians to be of great value for their life.



- As God is the inspirer and originator of the books of both testaments, the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament acquired full meaning in the New.



Chapter V: The New Testament

The Word of God is presented and shows its force supremely in the writings of the New Testament.



- The writings of the New Testament are a perpetual and divine testimony to the person of Jesus Christ, his life and teachings.



- Among the inspired writings, the Gospels stand out; because they form the primary testimony to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ .



- The Church firmly holds that the Gospels are historical documents, following a process of composition, and faithfully communicate the deeds and words of Christ for our salvation.



- The other writings of the New Testament, also composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explain further the teachings of Christ and tell the story of the Church.



Chapter VI: Sacred Scriptures in the Life of the Church

The Church holds in reverence the Sacred Scriptures as it does the Eucharist, especially in the Sacred Liturgy.



- The Church has kept Sacred Scriptures together with Sacred Tradition as the supreme rule of its faith.
- All the Church's preaching is to be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scriptures.



- The Church encourages also the study of the Church Fathers and of the Sacred Liturgies.
- Catholic exegetes (*interpreters of biblical texts*), theologians and others who are engaged in biblical studies need to renew their efforts to study and expound the Bible.



- The study of Sacred Scriptures is the very soul of theology.
- The spiritual life and the pastoral ministry of priests, religious and all the faithful should be nourished by Sacred Scriptures.



- Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scriptures so that it becomes a dialogue between God and the human reader.
- It is the duty of bishops to instruct the faithful entrusted to them in the right use of Sacred Scriptures.



- It is hoped that the reading and study of Sacred Scriptures will give a new impulse to the spiritual life of the Church.