

# Revelation & Faith

## Table of Contents

<b>REVELATION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HUMAN CREATURE.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GOD, AN INFINITE MYSTERY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>OUR OWN FAITH EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONVERSION/METANOIA.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DOGMA.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## **Revelation & Faith**

### **Revelation**

**“It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature.”**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Para. 51)

### **Faith**

**Faith is man’s response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life.**

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Para. 26)

## REVELATION

1. *By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation.*<sup>1</sup>
2. *By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.*<sup>2</sup>
3. *God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words.*<sup>3</sup>
4. After Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden,<sup>4</sup> God did not abandon them or their progeny. God walked with all of Adam's descendants who were obedient to Him. God's revelation of His Divine plan of salvation began with Abraham. God said to Abraham: "Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will find blessing in you."<sup>5</sup>
5. God's self revelation continued through Abraham's descendants Isaac and Jacob, the Patriarchs, whose progeny formed Israel. The New Testament also considers Jacob and King David as Patriarchs.
6. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years, and through Moses, a Hebrew and descendant of Abraham, God continued to reveal his plan of salvation. "God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed His people and revealed His law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, He prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity."<sup>6</sup>
7. The promise that God made to Abraham, "*I will make of you a great nation*" was fulfilled through David. God made a covenant with David, "*Your house and your kingdom are firm forever before me; your throne shall be firmly established forever.*"<sup>7</sup> God also revealed to David that He will establish a kingdom for his

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<sup>1</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 50) Print.

<sup>2</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 68) Print.

<sup>3</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 69) Print.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 3:23

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 12:1-3

<sup>6</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 72) Print.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Sam. 7:16

offspring.<sup>8</sup>

8. The fullness of God's revelation was accomplished in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who suffered and died for our sins, and was raised from the dead by God, His Father. St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Hebrews, *"In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."*<sup>9</sup>
9. It is through the Paschal Mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, that mankind has been reconciled to God and can live throughout eternity with God if he chooses.

## **HUMAN CREATURE**

10. God gave mankind free will, the ability to choose and to obey or disobey him.<sup>10</sup> Unlike other creatures, humans have knowledge of good and evil.<sup>11</sup> They have a moral awareness of consequence to their choices. Humans have a self-consciousness and can feel embarrassed, frustrated, restless etc.<sup>12</sup> Unlike any animal, humans can change themselves. We can question, alter relationships, give meaning to life and possibly move beyond our circumstances of birth or current circumstances.<sup>13</sup>
11. Unlike any other creature, humans are **CREATED IN THE DIVINE IMAGE**.<sup>14</sup> We are born with a deep consciousness of God and a deep desire to be in relationship with the Creator. It is our choice to develop that consciousness or to deny it. **HUMAN DIGNITY** rests on the fact that humanity possesses the Divine Image and Likeness, and thus throughout life's journey, is called to communion with God, it's creator. The invitation to converse with God is given to the human at the moment of their conception. From birth, humans have a free will to make choices and determine their own destiny, and to seek or reject the deep desire to acknowledge or reject God. But God's expectation is that humans never abuse their freedom to reject God who is their source of freedom and life. For only in God can true freedom be attained, and union with human life reach its fullness

## **GOD, AN INFINITE MYSTERY**

12. God is the creator, not part of creation. The mystery of the Kingdom of God is revealed, in accordance with God's will, to those who acknowledge the primacy of

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Sam. 7:12

<sup>9</sup> Heb. 1:1-4

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 2:16-17

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 3:6

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 3:7-13

<sup>13</sup> Gen 4:6-7

<sup>14</sup> Gen 1:27

Jesus in their lives. In the Gospel of Mark Jesus tells His disciples, “And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. He answered them, *“The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables.”*”<sup>15</sup>

13. With modern scientific methods and technical progress of our world some humans tend to discount God. Scientific methods of investigation alone are incapable of penetrating to the deepest nature of things but are often taken as the supreme. Science alone cannot arrive at the deepest truth.
14. Faith is above reason or scientific methodology. However, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind. Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God.<sup>16</sup>
15. There is a further danger that in the excessive confidence in modern inventions people may think they are sufficient unto themselves and abandon the search for higher values, ignoring the deep desire in their soul. Is God silent or are we rejecting our deep desire for relationship with the creator?
16. God does wish to communicate with human kind. God desires a relationship with each person. “God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world, by the natural lights of human reason.”<sup>17</sup> We must choose to discover God and seek the depth of relationship he desires for us. Only then, truly with faith illuminating reason, can we discover and listen to our creator through his creation. The Psalmist lifts his eyes to God and declares, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the works of his hands.”*<sup>18</sup>

## **THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH**

17. Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can accept, reject or lose this precious gift. To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith.<sup>19</sup>
18. Belief in God (Faith) is a response to God’s relationship with humans throughout history. God has been communicating with and relating to humanity from the dawn of time. God continues revealing Himself to people today. Thus, Faith is a presentation (proclamation or preaching) of the history of God relating with humanity.

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<sup>15</sup> Mk. 4:10-11; Lk. 8:10

<sup>16</sup> Gaudium Et Spes 36.1; Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 159) Print.

<sup>17</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 36) Print.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 19:1

<sup>19</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 162) Print.; Mk. 9:24

19. We must turn to the witnesses of faith: to Abraham, who “in hope... believed against hope.” In the Old Testament, God tested Abraham’s faith. Abraham chose to remain faithful.<sup>20</sup> Through this faithfulness God acquired a people for himself and to them he revealed himself in words and deeds as the one true, living God. This people learned by experience God’s ways with humanity and by listening to the voice of God speaking to them through the Moses and the prophets.
20. In the New Testament, we look first to the Virgin Mary, who, in “her pilgrimage of faith,” walked into the “night of faith” and said YES to God.<sup>21</sup> Then we look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who embodied and embodies faith in God. Like Abraham, Jesus is tested, and God proves that faith in Him will not disappoint.
21. Jesus and other prominent characters in the Bible are catalysts for the faith of others. Their lives and stories call us to faith in God. The ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, his death and resurrection, become the grounds for others to have faith in God. Therefore, if we believe in Jesus, because of His teachings and actions, we enter into the faith of Jesus in His Father, God
22. Because of His transcendence, God cannot be seen as He is, unless He himself opens up His mystery to man’s immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in His heavenly glory “the beatific vision.”<sup>22</sup> Looking forward, Faith gives us a foretaste of the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God “face to face, as he is.”<sup>23</sup> So faith is already the beginning of eternal life.<sup>24</sup>

## OUR OWN FAITH EXPERIENCE

23. There are common elements of “experiences” for each person who comes to faith. An individual accepts the work, and words of God and believes in the promises of God. Coming to faith involves letting go of our own security. We risk abandoning all to God. This choice to risk abandoning ourselves must be followed by our choice to be obedient and surrender to the call of God. God’s call in His son to humanity is “Follow me.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to His disciples, “*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves.*”<sup>26</sup>
24. If we follow the WORD of God to be obedient and surrender to the call of God, We are responding to God our response is not due to our own effort. We are able to

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<sup>20</sup> Rom. 4:16-24

<sup>21</sup> Lk, 1:38; Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 165) Print.

<sup>22</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 1028) Print.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12

<sup>24</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 163) Print.

<sup>25</sup> Jn. 1:43; Mt. 19:21

<sup>26</sup> Mt. 11:28-29

respond due to the gift of God, which opens our self to SELF (our oneness with God from the beginning). As our SELF grows and develops, we must share this in a community.

25. Throughout history God has enlisted individuals to help in the proclamation of his relationship with his people. Prophets through the ages and faithful believers have preserved the memory of God's revelation in history. This is **Divine Revelation**. "*It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will.*"<sup>27</sup> "*We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*"<sup>28</sup> It has been put down in **Sacred Scripture** as the word of God, and handed down through the **Traditions** of the early Church in Apostolic Succession. "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'" Apostolic preaching was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.<sup>29</sup>
26. Just as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, the Prophets, Jesus, Peter, Paul and the apostles did in history, the memory of relationship with God must be proclaimed in community by the faithful.

### **CONVERSION/METANOIA**<sup>30</sup>

27. A profound element of the experience of faith is CONVERSION. This conversion is usually a process or journey of growth, learning and repenting.<sup>31</sup> Repenting is a sailing term, which means to turn away from, turn around. In conversion we are called to turn our hearts and life toward God and be transformed (Metanoia). It is a lifelong journey involving constant readjustments, recollections, discovery and commitment to the experiences of God in our life.

### **DOGMA**

28. A doctrine or body of doctrines concerning faith or morals formally stated and authoritatively proclaimed by a church. The Catholic dogmas reflect conscience, accountable moments of faith which clarify God revealing himself in human history. The Catholic Catechism explains: "When the body of bishops define a doctrine, they do so in conformity with revelation itself, by which all are bound to abide and to which they are obliged to conform. This revelation is transmitted in its entirety either in written form or in oral tradition through the legitimate succession of bishops and through the light of the Spirit of truth it is scrupulously preserved in the church and

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<sup>27</sup> Eph. 1:9

<sup>28</sup> Jn. 1: 2-3

<sup>29</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 77) Print.

<sup>30</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary

<sup>31</sup> Mk. 1:14-15

unerringly explained.”<sup>32</sup> Simply stated, in the Church, the memory of God in History has been carefully preserved and passed on through scripture and tradition as dogmas of faith.

29. The governing body over our deposit of faith is the Magisterium.<sup>33</sup> “Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.”<sup>34</sup>
30. This collective memory of God preserved in the Church is only part of the mystery. God enters into each individual life and the Spirit reveals God to each person. Sometimes gently moving you to faith or perhaps with tremendous urgency driving an individual to a more intimate relationship as in the case of the conversion of Saul.<sup>35</sup> This is God at work in your own personal history.

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<sup>32</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 891-892) Print.

<sup>33</sup> The teaching authority of the Church comprised of Bishops and the Pope

<sup>34</sup> Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. First ed. New York City: Image/Doubleday, 1995. (para. 86) Print.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 9:1-9