

PART ONE

CATECHESIS *in the*
CHURCH'S MISSION *of*
EVANGELIZATION

CHAPTER ONE

REVELATION *and* ITS TRANSMISSION

1. JESUS CHRIST, REVEALER AND REVELATION OF THE FATHER

REVELATION IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL PLAN

- 11 All that the Church is, all that the Church does, finds its ultimate foundation in the fact that God, in his goodness and wisdom, wanted to reveal the mystery of his will by communicating himself to human beings. St. Paul describes this mystery in these words: God, in Christ, “chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:4-5). From the very beginning of creation, God has never ceased to communicate this plan of salvation to human beings and to show them signs of his love; and “although man can forget God or reject him, he never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness.”¹
- 12 God manifests and puts into action his plan in a new and definitive way in the person of the Son, sent in our flesh, through whom we “might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature” (DV 2). Revelation is an initiative of God’s love, and is directed toward communion: “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col 1:15, 1 Tim 1:17) out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends (see Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar 3:38), so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself” (DV 2). The economy of Revelation, moreover, “is realized by deeds and words

1 CCC 30.

having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them” (DV 2). By dwelling as a human being among human beings, Jesus not only reveals the secrets of God but brings to fulfillment the work of salvation. In fact, “to see Jesus is to see his Father (Jn 14:9). For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making himself present and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover he confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal” (DV 4).

13 God has revealed his love, and from the depths of the divine plan comes forth the newness of the Christian proclamation, “we can tell all peoples: ‘God has shown himself. In person. And now the way to him is open. The novelty of the Christian message does not consist in an idea but in a fact: God has revealed himself.’”² Precisely because it unveils a new life—life without sin, life as his children, life in abundance, eternal life—this proclamation is beautiful: “The forgiveness of sins, justice, sanctification, redemption, adoption as children of God, the inheritance of heaven, kinship with the Son of God. What news is more beautiful than this? God on earth and man in heaven!”³

14 The Christian proclamation communicates the divine plan, which is:

- a mystery of love: human beings, loved by God, are called to respond to him, becoming a sign of love for their brothers and sisters;
- the revelation of the intimate truth of God as Trinity and of humanity’s vocation to a filial life in Christ, source of his dignity;

2 Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, (September 30, 2010), 92.

3 John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum*, homilia 1.2 (PG 57:15).

- the offer of salvation to all people through the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, gift of God's grace and mercy, which implies liberation from evil, from sin, and from death;
- the definitive call to reunite scattered humanity in the Church, bringing about communion with God and fraternal union among people already in the here and now, but to be fulfilled completely at the end of time.

JESUS PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

- 15** At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God, accompanying it with signs; “that he had been sent to announce a joyful message (cf. Lk 4:18) to the poor, making it plain and confirming by his life that the Kingdom of God is for all men,”⁴ starting with the poorest and with sinners, and calls for conversion (cf. Mk 1:15). He inaugurates and proclaims the kingdom of God for every person. Jesus Christ, with his life, is the fullness of Revelation: he is the complete manifestation of God's mercy, and at the same time of the call to love that is in the heart of humanity. “He himself revealed to us that ‘God is love’ (1 Jn 4:8) and at the same time taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation” (GS 38). Entering into communion with him and following him confers fullness and truth upon human life: “Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man” (GS 41).
- 16** The Lord, after his death and resurrection, gave the Holy Spirit to fulfill the work of salvation and sent the disciples to continue his mission in the world. From the missionary mandate of the Risen One emerge the words which pertain to evangelization, intimately connected to one another: “proclaim” (Mk 16:15); “make disciples, baptizing and teaching” (Mt 28:19-20), “you shall be witnesses” (Acts 1:8), “do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19), “that you

4 GDC 163.

love one another” (Jn 15:12). In this way the characteristics of a dynamic of proclamation take shape, in which there is a close connection between the recognition of God’s action in the heart of every person, the primacy of the Holy Spirit, and the universal openness to every person. Evangelization is therefore a reality that is “rich, complex and dynamic,”⁵ and in its development incorporates various possibilities: witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, inner change and social transformation. All of these actions are complementary and enrich one another. The Church continues to carry out this task with an immense variety of experiences of proclamation, continually urged on by the Holy Spirit.

2. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST: THE RESPONSE TO GOD WHO REVEALS HIMSELF

- 17 Every person, prompted by the disquiet that dwells within his heart, by way of the sincere search for the meaning of his existence, is able to understand himself fully in Christ; in getting to know him, he senses that he is walking along paths of truth. The word of God manifests the relational nature of every person and his filial vocation to conform himself to Christ: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”⁶ When a human being comes within God’s reach, he or she is called to respond with the obedience of faith and to adhere with the full assent of intellect and will, freely welcoming the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). In this way, the believer, “finds what he had always been seeking and he finds it superabundantly. Faith responds to that ‘waiting,’ often unconscious and always limited in its knowledge of the truth about God, about man himself and about the destiny that awaits him.”⁷
- 18 The Christian faith is, first of all, the welcoming of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ, sincere adherence to his person, and the free decision to follow him. This *yes* to Jesus Christ contains two dimensions:

5 EN 17.

6 Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 1.1.1 (CCL 27.1; PL 32.661).

7 GDC 55.

trustful abandonment to God (*fides qua*) and loving assent to all that he has revealed to us (*fides quae*). In fact, “St. John brings out the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus for our faith by using various forms of the verb ‘to believe.’ In addition to ‘believing that’ what Jesus tells us is true (cf. Jn 14:10; 20:31), John also speaks of ‘believing’ Jesus and ‘believing in’ Jesus. We ‘believe’ Jesus when we accept his word, his testimony, because he is truthful (cf. Jn 6:30). We ‘believe in’ Jesus when we personally welcome him into our lives and journey toward him, clinging to him in love and following in his footsteps along the way (cf. Jn 2:11; 6:47; 12:44),”⁸ on a dynamic journey that lasts a whole lifetime. To believe, therefore, involves a twofold adherence: “to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it”⁹ and to the person because he himself is the truth attested to. It is an adherence of the heart, of the mind, and of action.

- 19** Faith is a gift from God and a supernatural virtue that can be born within us as the fruit of grace and as a free response to the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart to conversion and turns it toward God, giving it “joy and ease in assenting to the truth and believing it” (DV 5). Guided by faith, we come to contemplate and savor God as love (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-16). Faith, as the personal welcoming of God’s gift, is not irrational or blind. “Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God . . . hence there can be no contradiction between them.”¹⁰ Faith and reason, in fact, are complementary: while reason does not allow faith to fall into fideism or fundamentalism, “Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.”¹¹

- 20** Faith implies a profound existential transformation wrought by the Spirit, a *metanoia* that “manifests itself at all levels of the Christian’s

8 Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei*, (June 29, 2013), 18; Cf. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q.2 a.2.

9 CCC 177.

10 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio* (September 14, 1998), 43.

11 *Ibid.*, 13.