**Lightning Apologetics**

**…cont’d from last week. Scripture and Tradition.**

The question may arise on how the full Deposit of faith could remain intact and free from the corruption of human error and tampering. This is important because since there was no formal New Testament to guide the Church until 393 A.D, who would preserve and teach with authority the Gospel as it spread into various cultures and continents? To safeguard the Gospel, the Apostles appointed bishops as their successors, giving them “their own position of teaching authority” (CCC #77). In the process of apostolic succession, we see the continuation of Jesus’ delegated authority down through the ages. For it was Jesus who said to Peter, the first pope, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt 16:19) Remember our apologetics column from a few months ago on St. Peter and the Church’s authority? And to His Apostles Jesus said, “All authority has been given to me in Heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations…teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matt 28:18-20).

This idea of a living, continuing authoritative presence did not begin with the Catholic Church. In the Old Testament we see an ongoing authority in the Mosaic priesthood, as well as the royal dynasty of David and the Sanhedrin established just prior to Jesus’ birth.

Today, the bishops around the world in union with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, constitute the teaching authority of the Church. This authoritative body is often referred to as the Magisterium. The Magisterium, Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are so closely “linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others” (Dei Verbum #10). This is the living Tradition of the Church. This means that Tradition is the lived *interpretation* of Scripture and the preaching of Christ and the Apostles.

In defining what apostolic Tradition is, we have to first distinguish between social traditions, traditions of the Church and The Tradition. When the Church speaks of apostolic Tradition, she is not speaking of it in the sense that people traditionally open their gifts on Christmas Eve as opposed to Christmas day. This is our won business and can be modified upon Mom’s approval. Nor is apostolic Tradition the numerous theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions developed in the local churches over time. These traditions, (often referred to as small “t” traditions) can be modified or entirely dropped under the guidance of the Magisterium. The apostolic Tradition, however, comes from the apostles as they received it from Our Lord’s teaching, from His example, and from what the Holy Spirit revealed to them. It is this apostolic Tradition that is referred to when the Church speaks of Scripture and Tradition making up the Deposit of Faith. This apostolic Tradition must be preserved and taught by the Church.

The Bible has two acts. These acts are vitally related to one another. Both acts are covenants or agreements or testaments. These covenants were given in the old and new time. One of the principal covenants of the Old Testament was given on Mt. Sinai and the new covenant is very much related to Mt. Calvary. Under the Old Testament or covenant, God dealt with one nation and only indirectly with other nations. Under the New Testament God is dealing with all nations. Under the Old Testament justification was by the Law and in the New Testament justification is by Grace. The emphasis in the Old Testament was on doing certain things that God commanded and the emphasis in the New Testament in on a personal relationship with Christ. The Old Testament created expectations. The New brought realization. The Old stirs a longing in the heart as if waiting for someone, the New brings satisfaction to the heart. In the Old Testament man seeks God. In the New Testament, God seeks man. In the Old man is condemned as a sinner. In the New man is delivered from sin. If we had only the Old Testament we would have a lock without a key; a story with no ending. If we had only the New Testament it would be like having an end with no beginning, a fulfillment without a promise. It was put this way a long time ago, “The new is the old concealed. The old is in the new revealed.”

Jesus’ criticism of the Scribes and Pharisee’s in Mark 7:13, “that you have invalidated the word of God by your tradition,” is not a blanket condemnation of all tradition, but rather, a correction regarding a particular tradition of man (the Corban), a bad tradition that had circumvented a commandment in Scripture.

***Final part of the series on Tradition cont’d next week….. Phillip Bellini, DRE.***