

## **Adult Catechism November 21, 2016**

### My Family Home: A Place to Encounter the Living Christ

The Word of God

#### **Scripture Verses:**

**Matthew 24:35:** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**Proverbs 3:1-35:** My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ...

**John 1:1-2:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

**2 Peter 1:20-21:** Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

**John 17:3:** And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Introduction: Strong, faith-filled families are the foundation of our parishes, our Church and society. The Eparchy of Saskatoon is committed to helping parents and grandparents pass on the faith to our children and youth. This is a lifelong process. It is a great responsibility, but an even greater joy.

High hopes for our kids... Happiness! We all have high hopes for our kids, as we want the very best for them. More than anything else, we want them to be happy in spite of all the challenges we know that they will have to face. Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) Introducing our children to Christ, through scripture, who can be there for them even when we can't is one of the greatest gifts we can give...

Love of God's Word is part of our faith tradition: Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy the Book of the Gospel is venerated by the Faithful. However, we also need to read and study the scripture, as we can't really love what we don't

know. From Bible story time to individual and family scripture reading, we as parents can make a difference. Remember kids will emulate what they see you doing. Participating, or if necessary, initiating parish scripture-based activities is also important. The following inventory is to help you formulate a plan to grow in this important area of personal and family faith formation.

#### The Word of God (From Eparchy of Saskatoon Sobor 2014 Document)

We are The Word of God “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,” St. Paul teaches us in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col 3:16). Through the Word of God we come to know Christ, we encounter Him, and enter into a living relationship with Him. “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ,” said St. Jerome. In our parishes we want to follow the example of the first Christians so that the Word of God might become the foundation of our ecclesial, parochial, family, social, and personal life. I strongly urge pastors to diligently prepare their homilies based on the proclaimed Word of God in such a way that this Word might become “living and active” in the life of our parishioners, capable of nourishing them, giving them answers to real issues of the day, and inspiring them to service.

The Word of God should bear visible fruit in our everyday lives because only those who keep this Word, that is, obey it, will be called blessed in the Lord (see Lk 11:28). In our parishes there should not be a single family which does not own a Bible. I encourage all our faithful to read the Sacred Scriptures on a daily basis; this is done ideally through participation in parish bible-study groups or through prayerful reading at home. The newly published Catechism of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, “Christ our Pascha,” is another essential volume which should become a handbook of faith for all the members of our Church – children, youth, and adults. The Catechism, according to Metropolitan Andrey (Sheptytsky), is the foundation of Christian life. On this occasion I wish to emphasize that all the members of our Church have a personal responsibility throughout their whole lives to acquire an ever deeper knowledge of the truth of the Holy Faith, while the clergy must not neglect their responsibility of teaching the faith to their parishioners, not only through preaching, but also through catechetical instruction. When we speak of catechesis, we understand this to be a continuous process of entering into the mystery of the Church, to be applied not only to children who are preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments). Permanent and continuous formation for various age groups – children, youth, adults, and the elderly – is an essential component of the vibrant parish. Finally, I would like to emphasize that just as it is with the Bible, so too the Catechism of our Church should be a handbook for each member of our community as it is a most valuable aid for a proper understanding and reading of the Word of God.

Scripture and Tradition (Taken from <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/scripture-and-tradition>) Protestants claim the Bible is the only rule of faith, meaning that it contains all of the material one needs for theology and that this material is sufficiently clear that one does not need apostolic tradition or the Church’s magisterium (teaching authority) to help one understand it. In the Protestant view, the whole of Christian truth is found within the Bible’s pages. Anything extraneous to the Bible is simply non-authoritative, unnecessary, or wrong—and may well hinder one in coming to God.

Catholics, on the other hand, recognize that the Bible does not endorse this view and that, in fact, it is repudiated in Scripture. The true “rule of faith”—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic

Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly.

In the Second Vatican Council's document on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum* (Latin: "The Word of God"), the relationship between Tradition and Scripture is explained: "Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

"Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence."

But Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants, who place their confidence in Martin Luther's theory of *sola scriptura* (Latin: "Scripture alone"), will usually argue for their position by citing a couple of key verses. The first is this: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). The other is this: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be equipped, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). According to these Protestants, these verses demonstrate the reality of *sola scriptura* (the "Bible only" theory).

Not so, reply Catholics. First, the verse from John refers to the things written in that book (read it with John 20:30, the verse immediately before it to see the context of the statement in question). If this verse proved anything, it would not prove the theory of *sola scriptura* but that the Gospel of John is sufficient. Second, the verse from John's Gospel tells us only that the Bible was composed so we can be helped to believe Jesus is the Messiah. It does not say the Bible is all we need for salvation, much less that the Bible is all we need for theology; nor does it say the Bible is even necessary to believe in Christ. After all, the earliest Christians had no New Testament to which they could appeal; they learned from oral, rather than written, instruction. Until relatively recent times, the Bible was inaccessible to most people, either because they could not read or because the printing press had not been invented. All these people learned from oral instruction, passed down, generation to generation, by the Church.

Much the same can be said about 2 Timothy 3:16-17. To say that all inspired writing "has its uses" is one thing; to say that only inspired writing need be followed is something else. Besides, there is a telling argument against claims of Evangelical and Fundamentalist Protestants. John Henry Newman explained it in an 1884 essay entitled "Inspiration in its Relation to Revelation." He wrote: "It is quite evident that this passage furnishes no argument whatever that the sacred Scripture, without Tradition, is the sole rule of faith; for, although sacred Scripture is profitable for these four ends, still it is not said to be sufficient. The Apostle [Paul] requires the aid of Tradition (2 Thess. 2:15). Moreover, the Apostle here refers to the scriptures which Timothy was taught in his infancy.

"Now, a good part of the New Testament was not written in his boyhood: Some of the Catholic epistles were not written even when Paul wrote this, and none of the books of the New Testament were then placed on the canon of the Scripture books. He refers, then, to the scriptures of the Old Testament, and, if the argument from this passage proved anything, it would prove too much, viz., that the scriptures of the New Testament were not necessary for a rule of faith."

Furthermore, Protestants typically read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 out of context. When read in the context of the surrounding passages, one discovers that Paul's reference to Scripture is only part of his exhortation that Timothy take as his guide Tradition and Scripture. The two verses immediately before it state: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14–15).

Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he has learned for two reasons: first, because he knows from whom he has learned it—Paul himself—and second, because he has been educated in the scriptures. The first of these is a direct appeal to apostolic tradition, the oral teaching which the apostle Paul had given Timothy. So Protestants must take 2 Timothy 3:16-17 out of context to arrive at the theory of sola scriptura. But when the passage is read in context, it becomes clear that it is teaching the importance of apostolic tradition!

The Bible denies that it is sufficient as the complete rule of faith. Paul says that much Christian teaching is to be found in the tradition which is handed down by word of mouth (2 Tim. 2:2). He instructs us to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15).

This oral teaching was accepted by Christians, just as they accepted the written teaching that came to them later. Jesus told his disciples: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me" (Luke 10:16). The Church, in the persons of the apostles, was given the authority to teach by Christ; the Church would be his representative. He commissioned them, saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

And how was this to be done? By preaching, by oral instruction: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The Church would always be the living teacher. It is a mistake to limit "Christ's word" to the written word only or to suggest that all his teachings were reduced to writing. The Bible nowhere supports either notion.

Further, it is clear that the oral teaching of Christ would last until the end of time. "'But the word of the Lord abides for ever.' That word is the good news which was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:25). Note that the word has been "preached"—that is, communicated orally. This would endure. It would not be supplanted by a written record like the Bible (supplemented, yes, but not supplanted), and would continue to have its own authority.

This is made clear when the apostle Paul tells Timothy: "[W]hat you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Here we see the first few links in the chain of apostolic tradition that has been passed down intact from the apostles to our own day. Paul instructed Timothy to pass on the oral teachings (traditions) that he had received from the apostle. He was to give these to men who would be

able to teach others, thus perpetuating the chain. Paul gave this instruction not long before his death (2 Tim. 4:6–8), as a reminder to Timothy of how he should conduct his ministry.

**What is Tradition?** In this discussion it is important to keep in mind what the Catholic Church means by tradition. 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 to saints, or even liturgical rubrics. Sacred or apostolic tradition consists of the teachings that the apostles passed on orally through their preaching. These teachings largely (perhaps entirely) overlap with those contained in Scripture, but the mode of their transmission is different. They have been handed down and entrusted to the Church. It is necessary that Christians believe in and follow this tradition as well as the Bible (Luke 10:16). The truth of the faith has been given primarily to the leaders of the Church (Eph. 3:5), who, with Christ, form the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20). The Church has been guided by the Holy Spirit, who protects this teaching from corruption (John 14:25-26, 16:13).

Paul illustrated what tradition is: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures. . . . Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Cor. 15:3,11). The apostle praised those who followed Tradition: "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2).

The first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42) long before there was a New Testament. From the very beginning, the fullness of Christian teaching was found in the Church as the living embodiment of Christ, not in a book. The teaching Church, with its oral, apostolic tradition, was authoritative. Paul himself gives a quotation from Jesus that was handed down orally to him: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

This saying is not recorded in the Gospels and must have been passed on to Paul. Indeed, even the Gospels themselves are oral tradition which has been written down (Luke 1:1–4). What's more, Paul does not quote Jesus only. He also quotes from early Christian hymns, as in Ephesians 5:14. These and other things have been given to Christians "through the Lord Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:2).

Fundamentalists say Jesus condemned tradition. They note that Jesus said, "And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3). Paul warned, "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8). But these verses merely condemn erroneous human traditions, not truths which were handed down orally and entrusted to the Church by the apostles. These latter truths are part of what is known as apostolic tradition, which is to be distinguished from human traditions or customs.

Consider Matthew 15:6–9, which Fundamentalists and Evangelicals often use to defend their position: "So by these traditions of yours you have made God's laws ineffectual. You hypocrites, it was a true prophecy that Isaiah made of you, when he said, 'This people does me honor with its lips, but its heart is far from me. Their worship is in vain, for the doctrines they teach are the commandments of men.'" Look closely at what Jesus said.

He was not condemning all traditions. He condemned only those that made God's word void. In this case, it was a matter of the Pharisees feigning the dedication of their goods to the Temple so they could avoid using them to support their aged parents. By doing this, they dodged the commandment to "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12).

Elsewhere, Jesus instructed his followers to abide by traditions that are not contrary to God's commandments. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice" (Matt. 23:2–3).

What Fundamentalists and Evangelicals often do, unfortunately, is see the word "tradition" in Matthew 15:3 or Colossians 2:8 or elsewhere and conclude that anything termed a "tradition" is to be rejected. They forget that the term is used in a different sense, as in 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15, to describe what should be believed. Jesus did not condemn all traditions; he condemned only erroneous traditions, whether doctrines or practices, that undermined Christian truths. The rest, as the apostles taught, were to be obeyed. Paul commanded the Thessalonians to adhere to all the traditions he had given them, whether oral or written.

The task is to determine what constitutes authentic tradition. How can we know which traditions are apostolic and which are merely human? The answer is the same as how we know which scriptures are apostolic and which are merely human—by listening to the magisterium or teaching authority of Christ's Church. Without the Catholic Church's teaching authority, we would not know with certainty which purported books of Scripture are authentic. If the Church revealed to us the canon of Scripture, it can also reveal to us the "canon of Tradition" by establishing which traditions have been passed down from the apostles. After all, Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church (Matt. 16:18) and the New Testament itself declares the Church to be "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Scripture and Family Faith Formation: Every step in our journey in faith brings us closer to Christ—even small changes can make a big difference. Begin your plan to build your 'domestic church with this self-assessment:

1. We experience a hunger for God and seek to know Him through the reading of His word.

*a. Never b. Rarely c. sometimes d.*

*Frequently*

2. In order to awaken the desire for God in our children, and knowledge of Him, we read Holy Scripture together as a family.

*a. Never b. Rarely c. sometimes d. Frequently*

3. I make it a priority to learn about my Ukrainian Greek Catholic faith, and the teachings of the Church.

*a. Never b. Rarely c. sometimes d. Frequently*

4. I participate in parish or Eparchial faith formation opportunities.

*a. Never b. Rarely c. sometimes d. Frequently*

5. As a parent, I make it a priority that my children participate in faith formation activities.      a. *Never*   b. *Rarely*   c. *sometimes*   d. *Frequently*