



61st Year

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THE POWER OF SACRED TRADITION

The teaching of the Church is not a stapling of inspirations and inventions, but a constant flow of the divine wisdom of the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost of the holy Apostles. From their own mouth the truth of the Gospel was spread to the apostolic fathers. From then subsequently to the fathers and teachers, to the confessors and preachers of the divine word, to the monastic saints and teachers and righteous ones of the Church down to our own time and it will be being spread to the close of the age.

This spiritual treasure, which the Apostle Timothy received as a heritage from the Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, with the assurance both of the messianic prophecies, as well as of the contemporary martyrs of faith, he is called upon to preserve and to impart to the following generations of believers.

The manner of preserving and imparting the sacred tradition

There are mainly two powers which secure the quality and the preservation of the sacred Tradition: 1) divine grace and 2) the self-denial of faith.

The apostle Paul advises the apostle Timothy to gain strength from the grace which was given him by Christ. And it is true in the spiritual struggle for preserving the truth we are not alone. We have a helper and supporter. It seems that we are building our salvation, however in reality He is constructing. It is important that we have this in our mind, because "if the Lord is not constructing the home those constructing toiled in vain" (Psalm 126:1). We ought to be sailing along with the breathe and flow of divine grace in order for us to reach to the Kingdom of the Heavens. With the help of grace we believe and are saved, with its power we progress in virtue and bear fruit spiritually. The grace was given from the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ and is imparted through the performed mysteries (sacraments) of the Church. The Church is the ark of truth and the bearer of grace.

Despite these things our own disposition, eagerness and will are also necessary, as St. John Chrysostom interprets "for grace, even though grace, saves those who wish", in other words divine grace, even though it is given freely by God, nevertheless saves those who desire, who seek and wish to be saved. No one can be saved

by force. And in this voluntary effort of ours to contribute to our salvation again we have the Lord himself as a helper. "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). It is God who proceeds to every action so as to strengthen our will for us to do whatever is according to His will.

The good soldier and the good athlete

The apostle Paul advises the apostle Timothy to face the difficulties in his spiritual struggle like a good soldier, "suffer hardship as a good soldier", so as to both preserve the genuineness of the sacred tradition, but also with its strength to surpass the obstacles and to be victorious. He urges him to be:

1. Disciplined. Discipline in spiritual life means a conscientious obedience to spiritual fathers and to the spiritual rules of the Church. This secures to the spiritual struggler strength from above and averts deception and apostasy. The "obey the rulers", which the apostle Paul writes in another context, proves that good Christians ought to proceed "as children of obedience".

2. Courageous. To not fear either the difficulties or the sacrifices demanded in order to complete the aim of his spiritual mission. To have in mind that which the apostle himself also says, "I am always able in Christ who strengthens me", I always prevailed because Christ strengthens me in my struggle.

3. Dedicated. To not be swayed by the cares of daily life, "the business of life", and to not neglect his mission and to stray from his sacred aim which is the teaching of the Gospel and the salvation of souls. Otherwise there is danger in the journey towards the kingdom of God that he will stray and be found in the unpleasant position of the Lord not recognizing his struggle.

As an example is the athlete who takes part in a contest. In order for his athletic efforts to be recognized and to gain the reward or the medal of a specific athletic game he must respect the rules of the athletic game. Otherwise his struggle will be invalidated. Consequently, unlawful athletic contesting has no reward, is not crowned.

And which are the rules of legal spiritual contesting? Of course the lifebearing Commandments of the Gospel. Commandments which the faithful Christian ought to constantly have in his mind and to deeply delve into their meaning. If he strays from these or lessens their importance he has Christ himself as a judge who said that not even one iota nor an accent will cease applying from the law of the Gospel, so long as the world exists unto the close of the age (Mat. 5:18). Living faith, humility, patience, repentance and finally love for neighbor are the general rules upon which the scriptural struggler ought to proceed. To move and delve in this sacred tradition of the Church so that his spiritual struggle is considered and sanctified in Christ. And to actively contribute in the strengthening of the fellow travelers of the kingdom of God.

If we do not first become light we cannot enlighten the others. So for this reason we should not depart from the light of the Gospel. We should be bearers of the Holy Spirit, so as to know where we are going in order to guide then the others as well. We should pay attention that we not give "the holy things to the dogs". That we not entrust, in other words, the treasure of the Gospel to whoever are not able or do not wish to value and to utilize it.

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