



TRADITION: A Narrative

People belong to different groups, family groups, community groups, social groups, friendship groups and so on. It is the nature of the human person that learning about who they are and about others is an encounter that takes place within such groups in accordance with their traditions, religious beliefs and lifestyles. Each group has a particular identity, interest, focus or purpose shared by its members. The Catholic Church is a community of people, who share belief in Jesus and who follow his teaching in their pursuit of building a relationship with God. It is in the shared experiences of the family and the Church community that people grow in knowledge of God. We call the many ways Catholics encounter God, Tradition. There are truths that Catholics believe and hold in common which are outlined in the Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed.

The Tradition of the Catholic Church is concerned with the shared, living faith which is passed on from generation to generation. Tradition and Scripture are the two pillars of the Church. They are distinct, yet Scripture can also be considered part of the Tradition because it is read, reflected upon, interpreted and is a source for prayer in the lived experience of believers. Tradition is not static but dynamic, evident in the actions of the Church and in the lives of believers. Through worship, prayer, sacraments, doctrines, theology and teachings, the Catholic Tradition is shared, celebrated and handed on through faith and witness. Artworks, architecture, music and devotional, ceremonial and spiritual actions of particular communities express the Tradition in many and varied ways.

The Church has wisdom; a wisdom born from lived experience and Scripture. As a worldwide entity, the Church has access to material, information and people as resources which enable it to be informed about issues and events. People can turn to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, to the various letters, encyclicals and writings of Popes and Church bodies to be appraised of ways to act in the world. The Catholic Church invites all to listen to the wisdom of the faith community expressed through its lived Tradition. This wisdom is motivated by the life and teaching of Jesus. It is through actions that the community of Christ bears witness to its Tradition and through this, something of the mystery of God is revealed.

Tradition will continue to evolve in future generations as it has done since the time of Jesus. Catholics express their faith in particular ways in order to shed light on the significance and implications of living the Gospel in their particular context. Therefore, Tradition is in a continual state of renewal; always aiming to reach the fullness of divine truth. Recontextualisation of the Catholic culture offers an invitation to make meaning. It is hoped that this contemporising occurs without compromising the richness of its Tradition. Today, Catholic schools cater for a student community with different belief or nonbelief styles or philosophies of life. How a school carries out its role of helping students to make meaning or understand traditional Catholic symbols, concepts, and rituals is an important consideration. Openness and dialogue are fundamental to being Catholic in the world, and these qualities, therefore, should be the experience of students in Catholic schools.

Dialogue is born from a respectful attitude toward the other person, from a conviction that the other person has something good to say. It supposes that we can make room in our heart for their point of view, their opinion and their proposals. Dialogue entails a warm reception and not a preemptive condemnation. To dialogue, one must know how to lower the defences, to open the doors of one's home and to offer warmth. (Bergoglio & Skorka, 2013. p. XIV)

Within the life of the Church, people learn the message of Christ in many different ways, thus promoting the ongoing renewal and unity of the Church. There are truths that Catholics believe and hold in common. There are different ways to pray, different ways to learn about Church teaching and Scripture and so on. The invitation to enter into a relationship with God comes from God, it is not the initiative of a human person. God works through people and the Church. The Spirit of Jesus is at work through his Holy Spirit and continues to inspire people to lead Christian lives. Being a Catholic Christian is not simply about adhering to teachings, or attending Mass on Sunday, or praying daily. These are important as they nourish individuals within the community of the Church. Their purpose, however, is to

lead people to act in a particular Christian way in the world. The dynamic nature of the Catholic Church does not merely call for a passive response, but demands a call to action.

References

Bergoglio, J.M. & Skorka, A. (2015). *On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis On faith, family and the Church in the 21st century*. D. F. Rosenberg (Ed), (A. Bermudez & H Goodman Trans.). USA: Image, a division of Penguin Random House.