

**Homily Notes**  
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**Sunday, May 29, 2011**

**Scripture and the Catholic Church**

When we say we are "Catholics" we are letting people know that we follow the authority of the Catholic Church. We are saying that the Catholic Church has the Authority to interpret Scripture and teach faith and morals. Of course, a non-Catholic would disagree. They would say that authority rests somewhere else, generally in Sacred Scripture alone...or Sola Scriptura.

**Sola Scriptura (Only Scripture):** Is the teaching that the Bible is the only Inspired and authoritative word of God, is the only source for Christian doctrine, and is accessible to all—that is, it is perspicuous and self-interpreting.

A short scenario: You are at home and a Protestant missionary comes to your door:

**Missionary:** "Good afternoon may I share some words of faith with you?"

**Catholic:** "Sure, what is the Authority for the faith you are about to share?"

**Missionary:** "From The Bible... IT is the only authority for a Christian?"

**Catholic:** "Prove to me by using Scripture alone that Scripture is the only authority for Christian Doctrine."

This is where things get a little difficult for the missionary. There is nowhere in Scripture that says: "Scripture is the sole authority for Doctrine" or anything like that.

Many will quote: **2 Timothy 3:16** "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*"

This certainly says that Scripture is inspired, and of course it is, but it doesn't say it is the sole authority AND if you look at it in the proper historical context you will see that this passage is talking about the Old Testament. The New Testament would not be compiled for almost three hundred years after Paul wrote this.

If you look the the preceding verse you will see in **2 Tim 3:15**: "*and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*" The only Scriptures that Timothy would have known from infancy would have been the Old Testament.

**What came first...the Catholic Church or the New Testament?**

**Where did the book we now call "The Bible" come from?**

When you ask people..."Where did the Bible come from?" They will generally answer "From God." Okay, God did inspire Scripture, but it's no like God threw us down a complete manuscript called "The Bible" with all 73 books in it. There were different versions of the Old Testament being used before Christ. There was the Masoretic Hebrew texts and the Greek Septuagint, compiled in about 250 BC and widely used in Palestine during the time of Christ and often quoted by the New Testament writers. It is from the Septuagint that the Catholic Church gets its Old Testament Canon (Canon being the list of books that are in the Bible.)

It wasn't until the Jewish Council of Jamnea in 90 AD that the Jews discussed which books would be in their canon of Scripture. They decided to use the Masoretic texts that were originally written in Hebrew and not the Septuagint, which had some books that were written in Greek. When the Protestants broke off from the Church they decided to use the Canon from Jamnea. Hence, that is why the Protestants have 7 less books in their Bible. The question I have is "Why would Christians accept a Canon of Scripture from a group of Jewish scholars who don't believe in Jesus? AND "If they are so wrong about Jesus what makes them so right about this?"

**Catholic Church Councils that Gave us Canon:** The New Testament books we have in Scripture were written sometime between Christ's death and around 70 AD. Christian Churches used the different books as readings at Mass. After a few hundred years there were so many different books being used at Mass, some that didn't seem worthy of being used, that the Bishops decided that they needed a Canon of Scripture. It was at the Council of Rome in 382 the Church came together and formed what is today the 73 Books of the Bible out of about 110 that were proposed. This Canon was confirmed at the Council of Hippo in 393 and again at the Council of Carthage in 397. It wasn't until the 16th Century that Luther left the Catholic Church and made his own Canon of Scripture that left out 7 books of Sacred Scripture. The agreed upon Canon of the Catholic Church is also used by the Orthodox Churches (ie Russian, Greek, Armenian, etc.)

If the Bible, which we received from the Catholic Church, is our sole rule of faith, who's to do the interpreting? And Why are there so many conflicting understandings among Evangelicals and Fundamentalists even on central doctrines that pertain to salvation?

Some people would say that different Evangelicals and Fundamentalists agree on the essentials of salvation, it is just the secondaries they disagree on. Really?? Show me in Scripture where the Bible labels some beliefs and "Essential" and some as "Secondary?"

Evangelicals and Fundamentalists disagree on central issues such as baptismal regeneration and the necessity of baptism (is it merely a sign, or does it have a real role in the process of justification?), whether or not one can forfeit salvation (some Protestants say that's impossible, others say it is possible). they all claim to be "Bible-only Christians," but which group is right? Who has the final authority when it comes to matters of faith and morals and who is the authentic interpreter of Scripture?

**The question you need to ask yourself this week is "Who has the authority to interpret Scripture and make Doctrines?"**

**Next Week: More on the Catholic Church**

