



August 05, 2020

Archbishop's Statement on the Explosion in Lebanon

With the faithful of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, I reach out in solidarity to our beloved members of the Chaldean and Maronite Catholic communities as we look with shock and grief at the devastation that has taken place in Beirut.

I remember well my visit to Lebanon with the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in 2018. As the country responds to this disaster, I assure you of our prayers for consolation and healing, for you and for the victims and their loved ones.

Pontifical aid organizations like CNEWA and Aid to the Church in Need are already responding to the disaster and are appealing for prayers. Should you wish to reach out to them financially, you may do so at their Canadian websites acn-canada.org and cnewa.org/ca.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB

Archbishop of Vancouver

Understanding divine tradition and the development of doctrine

We have been studying the lives and teachings of the Church Fathers. They remind us that not all the truths revealed for us by God are found in the Bible; some truths are found in Divine Tradition. Scripture and Tradition are of equal value as sources of revelation.

Divine Tradition is the unwritten word of God, revealed truths taught by Christ and His apostles, which were given to the Church only by word of mouth and not through the Bible. The truths originally handed down by word of mouth were gradually recorded. By the end of the fourth century there were written records of Tradition such as: decrees of Popes and councils, creeds, liturgical books, acts of martyrs, writings of the Fathers, and inscriptions on tombs and monuments.

“Development of doctrine” is the growth in the Church’s understanding of the truths of divine revelation. St. Vincent of Lerins and the recently beatified John Henry Newman taught eloquently on the subject.

The writing of St. Vincent was used at the Office of Readings last Friday (Friday of Week 27). He compared the development of doctrine to the development of body: “Whatever develops at a later age was already present in seminal form: there is nothing new in old age that was not already latent in childhood.”

“Development means that each thing expands to be itself, while alteration means that a thing is changed from one thing into another.”

The understanding of revealed truths can develop and become more explicit over the course of time, but revealed truths can never be changed or be added onto. Blessed Newman pointed out the infallibility of the Church as the principle of preservation in the development of doctrine.

Three steps

There are three steps in the handing down of tradition. Monsignor Schumacher illustrated these three steps with the example of infant baptism.

The first of the three steps is oral tradition. After the Ascension of Christ, the apostles began to baptize infants, and they ordered other disciples to do likewise. The latter went to distant countries and told their own disciples to do the same thing. Nobody was alarmed by the practice and nobody objected to it. As the faith spread, so did the practice.

The second step is written tradition. In the second century someone wrote about infant baptism in his book. Other writers followed and wrote about infant baptism as a normal practice of the time, and within 100 years it was recounted numerous times.

The third and final step is the solemn declaration of the Church. In the 16th century someone questioned the practice of infant baptism. Therefore the Church, by her infallible authority, solemnly declared infant baptism to be right and true; so what was first oral tradition, and then written tradition, now became a declared article of faith.

Reading the Fathers

The Church Fathers had great love for Sacred Scripture. Their reflections and commentaries on the Scriptures are spiritual gems. The Navarre Bible and The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible contain commentaries which are solid in Catholic doctrine and rich in spiritual content. There are numerous references to the teachings of the Fathers in these commentaries.

Daily reading of the Fathers is beneficial to our spiritual life. I warmly recommend a new book compiled by Mike Aquilina: *A Year with the Church Fathers – Patristic Wisdom For Daily Living*. In this book the wisest, most practical teachings of the Fathers of the Church are gathered. They are presented in a format suitable for daily meditation and inspiration.