

PILLARS OF FAITH

14 Days Through Dei Verbum

Day Nine

GOD PREPARES A PEOPLE FOR THE SAVIOR

Today, we begin Chapter Four of *Dei Verbum* and consider section 14.

Chapter Three taught us what Sacred Scripture is. God is its principal Author. The sacred writers are true human authors. Their words must be interpreted with careful attention to literary form, historical circumstance, the unity of Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church and the analogy of Faith. Throughout this divine and human mystery, the truth and holiness of God remain intact.

Chapter Four now turns specifically to the Old Testament.

Section 14 begins with the universal saving purpose of God. The God of Infinite love carefully planned and prepared the salvation of the whole human race. Yet He carried out this universal purpose through a particular election. He chose a people for Himself and entrusted His promises to them.

God entered into covenant with Abraham. Through Moses, He entered into covenant with Israel. He manifested Himself to His people through words and deeds as the one true and living God. He spoke through the prophets, deepened Israel's understanding of His ways and prepared His people to make Him known among the nations.

The history of Israel was therefore not an accidental preface to Christianity. It formed part of God's deliberate preparation for the coming of Christ.

The Old Testament is not merely the surviving religious literature of an ancient people; its books contain the plan of salvation foretold, recounted and explained by sacred authors. They are written under divine inspiration. They are the true Word of God. They remain permanently valuable.

Section 14 thus presents three realities that must always be held together:

God wills the salvation of the whole human race.

God chose Israel for a unique role within that universal plan.

God gave the inspired books of the Old Testament as His true and permanently valuable Word.

The particular election of Israel serves the universal purpose of salvation. The promises given to Abraham look toward the blessing of all nations. The covenant made through Moses forms a people in whom the knowledge and worship of the one true God are preserved. The prophets call Israel to fidelity and announce the divine plan more widely.

All of this reaches its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

WHERE DID CONFUSION ENTER?

Section 14 is doctrinally strong. It clearly states that God acts first. God plans. God chooses. God enters into covenant. God manifests Himself. God speaks through the prophets. God inspires the sacred books.

The text does not present Israel's religion as a merely human search for God. It presents the history of Israel as the result of God's initiative and Revelation.

Nevertheless, certain phrases can become vulnerable to misuse when they are separated from this governing truth.

"ISRAEL CAME TO KNOW BY EXPERIENCE"

Section 14 says that Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men.

Understood within this sentence, this is thoroughly Catholic. God first manifested Himself through words and deeds. Israel then encountered the fidelity, justice, mercy and power of the God who had revealed Himself.

Abraham experienced the faithfulness of God to His promise. Israel experienced deliverance from Egypt. The people experienced God's provision in the desert, His judgment of sin, His patience after rebellion and His mercy when they returned to Him.

This was not experience creating revelation. It was experience receiving and confirming what God had objectively revealed and accomplished.

But in the twentieth century, “religious experience” had already become a dangerous theological expression when detached from objective Revelation. Modernism sought the origin of religion within human consciousness, sentiment and the felt need for the divine. Revelation was then treated as the expression of an inward religious experience rather than the supernatural communication of truth by God.

Pope St. Pius X had warned against making religious consciousness and Revelation synonymous. That warning supplies an important safeguard for section 14.

Israel did not gradually invent the one true God from within its own consciousness. God revealed Himself to Israel. The experience followed the divine initiative.

The text itself preserves this order. It first says that God manifested Himself through words and deeds. Only then does it say that Israel came to know His ways by experience.

Confusion entered when this order was reversed.

Some later approaches treated the Old Testament principally as a record of Israel’s changing religious consciousness. Under this interpretation, doctrines about God were said to arise gradually from social struggle, political need, national memory or the evolving self-understanding of a community. The prophets became voices of religious development rather than men through whose mouths God truly spoke.

Historical study can help us understand the human circumstances in which Revelation was received and recorded. But no method remains Catholic if it reduces Revelation to human religious experience.

God’s acts and words produce Israel’s experience of Him. Israel’s experience does not produce God or create His truth.

“A DEEPER AND CLEARER UNDERSTANDING”

Section 14 also says that Israel gained a deeper and clearer understanding of God’s ways as He spoke through the prophets.

This describes authentic progress within public Revelation.

God did not reveal every mystery with equal clarity at the beginning. He prepared His people gradually. Later Revelation illuminated what had been given earlier. The prophets called Israel back to the covenant, unfolded its moral demands, purified the people's understanding and directed their hope toward the Messiah.

Progress in Revelation does not mean that divine truth changed into its opposite. Nor does it mean that Israel's faith became true merely because it evolved.

The development was governed by God. Section 14 does not say that Israel independently developed a more advanced religion. It says that God spoke through the prophets and that, through this divine instruction, Israel understood His ways more deeply and clearly.

The phrase becomes vulnerable only when "deeper and clearer" is detached from "God Himself spoke to them through the mouth of the prophets." Once detached, legitimate progress can be converted into a theory of doctrinal evolution in which later beliefs simply replace earlier beliefs because human consciousness has changed.

That would reverse the meaning of the text.

The prophets did not correct God. God corrected His people through the prophets.

"REMAIN PERMANENTLY VALUABLE"

Section 14 teaches that the books of the Old Testament remain permanently valuable.

The grammatical subject is Important. The text speaks of the inspired books. It does not say that every ceremonial, sacrificial or judicial precept of the Mosaic covenant remains binding upon Christians.

The Old Testament remains permanently valuable because it is the true Word of God. It reveals the Creator, the fall, the promise, the covenant, the holiness and mercy of God, the gravity of sin, the need for redemption, the life of prayer and the preparation of Christ.

Its permanent value does not mean that the Old Covenant exists as a separate and sufficient saving path alongside the New Covenant.

The ceremonial rites of the Mosaic law prepared for Christ and prefigured His saving work. Once the reality had come, those no longer bound the Christian people as legal requirements for salvation. The Council of Florence taught clearly that the ceremonies, sacrifices and sacraments of the Old Law signified things to come and ceased as binding prescriptions after their fulfillment in Christ.

At the same time, their fulfillment does not make the inspired books useless. The Passover remains permanently valuable as the Word of God and as a divinely intended preparation for the Paschal Mystery. The Levitical sacrifices remain permanently valuable as Inspired Revelation and as figures of the one perfect Sacrifice of Christ. The Exodus remains permanently valuable as a real act of divine deliverance and as a pattern of redemption.

Therefore, two opposite errors must be rejected.

The first is Marcionism: the rejection of disparagement of the Old Testament as though it belonged to a different or inferior god and had no place in Christian faith.

The second is the treatment of the Old Testament as an autonomous salvific economy that does not require fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Section 14 teaches neither error.

Its opening words speak of God's preparation for the salvation of the whole human race. The following sections of the chapter will state explicitly that the Old Covenant was directed toward the coming of Christ and that the two Testaments belong to one divine plan.

Because section 14 is being read by itself today, we must already retain that Christological end. God's covenants with Abraham and Moses do not lead away from Christ. They prepare the history in which the eternal Son will come in the flesh.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN STATED MORE EXPLICITLY?

Section 14 does not teach religious subjectivism, evolutionary Modernism or two independent paths of salvation. Nevertheless, the section would have been less vulnerable to isolation if it had immediately made three qualifications explicit:

Israel's knowledge "by experience" arose from God's prior objective Revelation.

Its deeper understanding was produced by God's instruction through the prophets, not by the autonomous evolution of religious consciousness.

The permanent value of the inspired Old Testament books does not mean that the provisional legal economy of the Mosaic covenant remains binding or salvifically sufficient after its fulfillment in Christ.

The Council supplies these safeguards through the structure of the sentence, through earlier sections of *Dei Verbum* and through sections 15 and 16, which immediately follow. The perennial Magisterium supplies them even more explicitly.

The confusion of the postconciliar period did not necessarily begin because section 14 asserted something false. It often began when a phrase from the section was removed from its theological order.

Experience was separated from Revelation. Development was separated from the God who speaks. The Old Testament's permanent value was separated from its fulfillment in Christ. Dialogue was sometimes separated from evangelization. Respect for Israel was sometimes presented as though it required silence concerning Jesus Christ, the Messiah and only Savior.

None of these conclusions is required by section 14.

The authentic Catholic reading honors the election and promises of God, receives the Old Testament as His true Word and confesses that the entire saving plan reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ.

GOD CHOSE A PEOPLE IN ORDER TO PREPARE SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLES.

HE REVEALED HIMSELF THROUGH WORDS AND DEEDS.

HE SPOKE THROUGH THE PROPHETS.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE TRUE WORD OF GOD.

ITS PERMANENT VALUE LEADS US TOWARD CHRIOST, NOT AWAY FROM HIM.

I. READ – DEI VERBUM, CHAPTER FOUR, SECTION 14

Read the complete official text of section 14 before continuing.

14. In carefully planning and preparing the salvation of the whole human race the God of infinite love, by a special dispensation, chose for Himself a people to whom He would entrust His promises. First He entered into a covenant with Abraham (see Gen. 15:18) and, through Moses, with the people of Israel (see Ex. 24:8). To this people which He had acquired for Himself, He so manifested Himself through words and deeds as the one true and living God that Israel came to know by experience the ways of God with men. Then too, when God Himself spoke to them through the mouth of the prophets, Israel daily gained a deeper and clearer understanding of His ways and made them more widely known among the nations (see Ps. 21:29; 95:1-3; Is. 2:1-5; Jer. 3:17). The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. "For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

This section begins with God's careful preparation for the salvation of the whole human race. It recounts His covenant with Abraham and, through Moses, with Israel. It then describes God's manifestation through words and deeds, His speech through the prophets and Israel's growing knowledge of His ways. It concludes by affirming that the inspired books of the Old Testament contain the true Word of God and remain permanently valuable.

NOTICE FIRST WHAT SECTION 14 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S INITIATIVE:

God plans and prepares salvation.

His purpose concerns the whole human race.

He chooses a particular people within that universal purpose.

He entrusts His promises to them.

He establishes covenant with Abraham and, through Moses, with Israel.

God is the first Actor throughout salvation history.

NOTICE WHAT SECTION 14 TEACHES ABOUT REVELATION:

God manifests Himself through words and deeds.
He reveals Himself as the one true and living God.
Israel truly comes to know His ways through His action in history.
God speaks through the mouths of the prophets.
Israel's understanding grows because God continues to teach His people.
Revelation is divine initiative received within human history.

NOTICE WHAT SECTION 14 TEACHES ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS:

The sacred authors foretold, recounted and explained the plan of salvation.
Their books were written under divine inspiration.
The Old Testament contains the true Word of God.
Its books remain permanently valuable.
They were written for our instruction, endurance, consolation and hope.

A NOTE ABOUT THE CHOICE OF ISRAEL

God's choice of Israel was an act of grace. Israel was not chosen because it was the largest, strongest or most deserving nation. God chose in freedom and love, remaining faithful to the oath He had sworn to the fathers.

Election does not mean that God had no concern for the other nations. Section 14 begins by placing Israel's election inside God's plan for the salvation of the whole human race.

God narrows the historical line in order to widen the blessing.

He calls Abraham and promises that the nations will be blessed through his seed. He forms Israel so that the knowledge and worship of the true God will be preserved. He gives the Law, sends the prophets and prepares the lineage from which the Messiah will come.

The particular election is therefore missionary in its ultimate purpose. Israel is called to bear witness that the Lord alone is God and to prepare the way for the universal Kingdom of the Messiah.

This protects us from two distortions.

We must not despise Israel or imagine that God's historical acts and promises were meaningless.

But neither may we separate Israel's election from the Savior for whose coming it prepared.

Jesus does not appear as a stranger to the history of Israel. According to the flesh, He comes from the people of the covenant. He fulfills the Law and the Prophets. In Him the blessing promised to Abraham is extended to all nations.

A NOTE ABOUT COVENANT

A covenant is not merely a contract between equals. In the biblical history of salvation, it is a bond established by God's initiative. God calls, promises, commands and binds a people to Himself. The people are called to respond in Faith and obedience.

With Abraham, the covenant bears the promise of descendants and blessing.

Through Moses, God forms Israel as a holy people, delivers them from slavery, gives His Law and seals the covenant in blood.

The covenant reveals both divine grace and human responsibility. God acts first, but His people must hear His Word, worship Him alone and walk in His commandments.

Israel's repeated failures do not prove that God is unfaithful. They reveal man's need for a deeper redemption and a new heart. The prophets therefore promise a New Covenant, not because the one true God has changed, but because sinful man must be healed and brought into a more perfect communion with Him.

The whole covenantal history prepares for Christ, who seals the New and eternal Covenant in His Blood.

A NOTE ABOUT WORDS AND DEEDS

Section 14 repeats an important principle from section 2 of *Dei Verbum*: God reveals Himself through deeds and words that are intrinsically connected.

God does not merely communicate abstract propositions. He acts in history.

He calls Abraham. He delivers Israel from Egypt. He leads His people through the desert. He gives the Law. He judges infidelity. He shows mercy. He sends the prophets.

The inspired words interpret these deeds. They identify the Lord as the One who acts, discloses the meaning of His works, calls the people to Faith and preserves the divine testimony for later generations.

The deed without the revealed word may be misunderstood. The word without the deed could be reduced to an abstraction. In salvation history, God joins them.

This is why Israel's "experience" cannot be separated from God's speech. The event and its inspired interpretation belong together.

A NOTE ABOUT PERMANENT VALUE

The permanent value of the Old Testament is first the permanent value of God's Inspired Word.

Christians do not read Genesis, the Psalms, Isaiah or Wisdom merely as background literature. We receive them as books whose principal Author is God.

They teach us who God is. They reveal the dignity and fall of man. They teach us to pray. They expose the seriousness of sin. They show divine justice and mercy. They record the promises. They prepare the language of sacrifice, covenant, kingdom, priesthood, temple, wisdom, sonship and redemption through which the mystery of Christ is proclaimed.

The New Testament cannot be understood properly without the Old. Yet the Old Testament also possesses genuine value as Revelation in its own historical setting. God's call of Abraham and His deliverance of Israel were real divine acts before their fuller meaning was manifested in Christ.

Fulfillment does not mean erasure.

At the same time, permanent value does not mean that every provisional institution remains permanently binding. The inspired record remains. The divine truth remains.

The moral instruction remains according to its proper place in the one plan of God. The types remain permanently capable of illuminating their fulfillment.

But the Christian does not return from the New Covenant to the shadows as though the promised Savior had not come.

II. SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-3 (Douay-Rheims)

“And the Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father’s house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and IN THEE shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”

The call of Abraham is particular, but the promise is universal.

God calls one man, forms one people and establishes one historical line. Yet from the beginning, the nations are included within the purpose of the promise.

Israel’s election is not the denial of God’s universal love. It is the divinely chosen means by which the blessing will reach the whole world.

Exodus 24:7-8 (Douay-Rheims)

“And taking the book of the covenant, he read it in the hearing of the people: and they said: All things that the Lord hath spoken we will do, we will be obedient. And he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said: This is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.”

The covenant is bound to the Word of God, the obedience of the people and the shedding of blood.

These realities prepare us for the New Covenant. At the Last Supper, Christ declares the chalice to be His Blood of the New Testament. What was prepared in figure is fulfilled in the sacrifice of the true Lamb.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 (Douay-Rheims)

“Because thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee, to be his peculiar people of all peoples that are upon the earth. Not because you surpass all nations in number, is the Lord joined unto you, and hath chosen you, for you are the fewest of any people. But because the Lord hath loved you, and hath kept his oath, which he swore to your fathers.”

Election begins in divine love, not human superiority.

Israel possesses no reason for pride. The chosen people exists because God loves, promises and remains faithful.

The same truth should make Christians humble. Grace is never a reason to exalt ourselves over others. Election creates obligation. Those who have received the truth are called to fidelity, holiness and witness.

Romans 15:4 (Douay-Rheims)

“For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope.”

St. Paul speaks directly of the continuing value of the Old Testament for Christians.

The ancient Scriptures instruct the Church. They teach endurance through the trials of the patriarchs, the wilderness, persecution and exile. They console us with the fidelity of God. They give hope because the God who kept His promises in the past remains faithful.

The Old Testament is not dead history. Through it, God still instructs His people.

III. REMEMBER – WHAT CAME BEFORE?

A. St. Irenaeus

St. Irenaeus defended the unity of God’s saving plan against heretics who divided the God of the Old Testament from the Father revealed by Jesus Christ.

For Irenaeus, the one God educates the human race through successive stages. God does not change. Man is prepared gradually to receive what God intends to give.

The covenants, the Law and the prophets belong to one divine economy. They prepare mankind for the Incarnation and for mature communion with God in Christ.

This patristic teaching helps us read section 14 correctly.

Progress in salvation history does not mean progress from a false god to the true God. It means that the one true God gradually prepares His creatures to receive the fullness of His gift.

The divine pedagogy is an education governed by God, not the autonomous evolution of religion.

B. St. Augustine

St. Augustine also opposed every attempt to separate the two Testaments or to treat the Old Testament God as different from the God of the Gospel.

The one divine plan is hidden in promise and manifested in fulfillment. The patriarchs, sacrifices, prophecies and historical deliverances truly belong to their own time, but they also point beyond themselves.

The God who spoke through Moses and the prophets is the God who sent His Son.

For Augustine, Christians must learn to discern the spiritual reality toward which the figures point. Yet the spiritual sense never requires contempt for the historical acts or the inspired words. Grace fulfills what was promised and prefigured.

C. St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas distinguished the moral, ceremonial and judicial precepts of the Old Law.

The moral precepts express truths rooted in the natural law and are perfected by Christ. The ceremonial precepts ordered Israel's worship and foreshadowed Christ. The judicial precepts governed the particular civil life of the ancient people.

This distinction is necessary when section 14 speaks of permanent value.

The whole Old Testament remains the Inspired Word of God. But the legal obligations within the Old Covenant do not all remain binding in the same manner.

The ceremonial precepts were true and holy for the purpose God gave them: to order worship and signify future realities. Once Christ fulfilled those figures, Christians were not to observe them as necessities for salvation.

The Old Law therefore retains truth, meaning and revelatory value without remaining the governing covenantal law of the Church.

D. The Council of Florence

The Council of Florence explicitly taught that the ceremonies, sacrifices and sacraments of the Mosaic law signified realities to come. After the coming and saving Passion of Christ, these legal prescriptions ceased as necessary means of salvation, and the sacraments of the New Testament took their place.

This teaching guards the meaning of “permanently valuable.”

The inspired books remain permanently valuable. God’s acts remain part of salvation history. The moral and spiritual instruction remains. The types continue to reveal the wisdom of God and illuminate Christ.

But Christians may not place their saving hope in the legal observances of the Old Covenant as though the sacrifice of Christ were insufficient.

E. The Council of Trent

The Council of Trent received and venerated all the books of both the Old and New Testaments because one God is the Author of both.

This is the doctrinal continuity behind section 14.

The Old Testament is not a secondary canon. Its books are not merely human religious witnesses that the Church finds useful. They are sacred and canonical. They have God as their Author.

Trent also protected the full Catholic canon, including the deuterocanonical books rejected or demoted by the Protestant reformers.

When *Dei Verbum* calls the Old Testament the true Word of God, it stands within this prior conciliar confession.

F. Pope St. Pius X

Pope St. Pius X exposed the Modernist attempt to locate Revelation within religious sentiment and consciousness.

This warning is especially helpful when reading that Israel came to know God's ways "by experience."

Catholic Faith certainly includes a lived encounter with God. Abraham trusts, Moses obeys, Israel is delivered, the prophets suffer for the Word and the saints experience grace. But Revelation is not created by the believer's interior sentiment.

God objectively reveals. Man receives His Word by Faith.

The Modernist reversal makes human consciousness the source and makes doctrine an evolving expression of experience. Section 14 makes the opposite movement: God manifests Himself and speaks; Israel comes to know Him.

IV. BENEDICT XVI – GOD ENTERS HISTORY AND MAKES A COVENANT

Pope Benedict XVI frequently taught that biblical Faith differs from a vague search for the divine because the God of the Bible enters history, speaks and establishes a covenant.

The history of salvation is the history of God's relationship with humanity. God is not an impersonal force discovered at the end of philosophical speculation. He calls man, addresses him, listens to him, binds Himself by promise and invites a response of Faith.

In the Old Testament, this divine communication takes historical form. God calls Abraham. He gives a promise. He reveals His Name to Moses. He delivers a people. He gives His Word. He sends the prophets.

Benedict emphasized that the Old Testament already appears as a history in which God communicates His Word. This agrees closely with section 14: by covenants with Abraham and through Moses with Israel, God gains a people for Himself and reveals Himself through words and deeds as the one living and true God.

This historical character must be protected from two reductions.

The first reduction is rationalism, which treats the biblical record as a merely human construction and excludes divine action before examining the text.

The second is a vague spiritualism that ignores the concrete history, covenants, people, words and deeds through which God chose to act.

Catholic Faith receives both. God truly acts in history. The inspired books truthfully bear witness to His action.

Benedict also warned against new forms of Marcionism. Christianity cannot reject the Old Testament or oppose it to the New. Jesus is a son of Israel according to the flesh. The language, promises, and figures of the Old Testament are indispensable for confessing who He is.

Yet Benedict's defense of the Old Testament never made Christ optional. The mystery of His death and Resurrection fulfills the Scriptures. The continuity of God's plan includes real fulfillment and transcendence. The one Word toward whom Scripture moves is the eternal Word made flesh.

Thus we honor Israel's place in salvation history most truthfully when we receive everything God accomplished in Israel and confess the Messiah in whom His saving purpose reaches all nations.

V. PILLARS COMMENTARY

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ONE PEOPLE IF HE WILLED TO SAVE THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE?

God's universal purpose and Israel's particular election are not opposed.

God chose one people as the historical bearer of His promises and as preparation for the Savior of all. Through Israel, He preserved the knowledge of the one true God, gave the Law, raised up the prophets, formed a language of covenant and sacrifice and prepared the human ancestry of Jesus Christ.

The election of Abraham already contained a universal horizon: through him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

God's method displays His freedom and wisdom. He begins with one man and one people, but His purpose reaches the nations.

DOES "KNOW BY EXPERIENCE" MEAN THAT ISRAEL CREATED ITS OWN REVELATION?

No.

The sentence begins with God's manifestation through words and deeds. Israel experiences the ways of the God who has already acted and spoken.

The order is essential. God reveals. God acts. God speaks. Israel encounters, remembers and receives.

The experience is real, but it is responsive. It is not the source of revealed truth.

Confusion entered when religious experience was made primary and objective Revelation secondary. Under that reversal, biblical doctrine becomes the community's interpretation of its own experience rather than truth communicated by God.

That is not what section 14 teaches.

DOES A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING MEAN THAT TRUTH CHANGES?

No.

God gradually prepares His people and reveals His plan with increasing clarity. Later Revelation illuminates earlier Revelation. The prophets deepen Israel's understanding because God speaks through them.

Authentic development preserves what is true while unfolding its implications and directing it toward fulfillment.

Doctrinal evolution in the Modernist sense is different. It treats dogma as a changing human expression that may be replaced when religious consciousness or culture changes.

The prophets do not manufacture a new God suitable for a later age. The one true God uses them to correct, purify and instruct His people.

SUMMARY

Section 14 itself does not teach that Revelation arose from human religious experience or that divine truth changed as Israel's understanding developed.

God acted first. He revealed Himself through words and deeds, and He spoke through the prophets. Israel's experience was a response to Revelation, not the source of Revelation.

Confusion entered when this divine order was reversed – when Israel's changing religious consciousness was treated as the source of Scripture rather than God's objective Revelation.

Read with the perennial Faith, section 14 preserves the Catholic order:

God reveals. Man receives.

God speaks. Man believes.

God prepares. And in Jesus Christ, He fulfills.

VI. REFLECT

1. Do I recognize God's patient preparation throughout history?

God did not abandon mankind after the fall. He called, promised, covenanted, corrected and prepared. Do I see the long history of Israel as evidence of His patience and fidelity?

2. Do I receive the Old Testament as the true Word of God?

Do I neglect it as though only the New Testament mattered? Or do I read it with the Church, discovering the promises, prayers and divine instruction that prepare me to know Christ more deeply?

3. Do I place my experience under Revelation?

Personal experience can help me recognize God's action, but it is not the measure of divine truth. Do I allow God's Word to interpret and correct my experience, or do I reshape His Word according to what I feel?

4. Do I understand election as a call to service and fidelity?

Israel was chosen by grace for a purpose in God's plan. I too have received the Catholic Faith by grace. Do I treat that gift as a reason for pride, or as a responsibility to live, defend and hand on the truth?

5. Do I confess the unity of God's saving plan in Christ?

Do I honor everything God accomplished in the Old Testament while confessing without hesitation that every promise and preparation reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ?

VII. DEEPER THOUGHTS TO CONCLUDE THIS DAY

God did not abandon mankind after the fall.

He called Abraham, formed Israel as His people, established His covenant, gave the Law and spoke through the prophets. Through this long history, He prepared the world for the coming of His Son.

This is why the Old Testament remains permanently valuable. It is not merely the religious history of an ancient people. It is the inspired record of God's preparation for salvation.

It teaches us the language of promise, covenant, sacrifice, kingdom and redemption. It reveals God's justice, mercy and faithfulness. It gives us the Psalms with which Christ prayed and the prophecies He fulfilled.

But the permanent value of the Old Testament must not be separated from its fulfillment in Christ.

The Old Testament is not honored by refusing its fulfillment. Nor is Christ honored by despising the people, promises and Scriptures through which His coming was prepared.

Section 14 preserves this Catholic unity.

God revealed Himself through words and deeds. Israel received and experienced that Revelation. God spoke through the prophets. The sacred authors recorded His saving plan under divine inspiration.

Confusion entered when this order was reversed – when human religious experience was made the source of Revelation, historical development was placed above divine authorship or the Old Covenant was separated from its fulfillment in Christ.

Those interpretations are not required by section 14. They result from detaching its phrases from the whole Faith of the Church.

The Catholic order remains:

God speaks first.

Man receives His Word.

God prepares His people.

Christ fulfills the promises.

The history is real. The books are inspired. And the whole plan leads to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

TOMORROW, we will remain in Chapter 4, and consider sections 15 and 16: how the Old Testament was ordered toward the coming of Christ, how its books reveal a true divine pedagogy and how we must understand those things within them described as incomplete and temporary.

VIII. THE CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we thank Thee for Thy patient preparation of salvation.

In Thine infinite love, Thou didst not abandon the human race after sin.

Thou didst call Abraham, establish Thy covenant, form Israel as Thy people and speak through the prophets.

Thou didst reveal Thyself through words and deeds as the One true and living God.

Give us reverence for the sacred books of the Old Testament.

Teach us to receive them not as merely human religious records, but as Thy true and inspired Word.

Guard us from every form of Marcionism that would despise the Scriptures through which Thou didst prepare the coming of Thy Son.

Guard us also from every interpretation that would separate the Old Covenant from its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Keep us from making human experience the source of measure of Revelation.

May our experience be judged, purified and illuminated by Thy Word.

Preserve us from every false development that changes truth according to the spirit of the age.

Grant us instead a deeper and clearer understanding governed by the same Holy Ghost who spoke through the prophets and guides the Church in fidelity to the deposit of Faith.

Give us gratitude for the election of Israel and humility concerning the grace we ourselves have received.

May every gift lead us to obedience, holiness and faithful witness.

Teach us to recognize Thy Son in the promises, covenants, sacrifices and prophecies of old.

May we confess without fear that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets and the only Savior of the world.

Keep us faithful to Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the perennial teaching of Thy Church.

Where conciliar language is clear, help us receive it faithfully.

Where language is compact or vulnerable to misuse, guide us by the sure rule of the Catholic Faith.

Where the supposed “spirit of Vatican II” has departed from the written text and the prior Magisterium, give us wisdom to recognize the departure and courage to reject it.

May the patience Thou didst show throughout salvation history strengthen our hope.

May the fidelity Thou didst show to Thy promises teach us to trust Thee.

And may the whole of Scripture lead us to Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.

Amen.