

I loved watching the sprinters at this year's Olympics. One of my favorite races was the men's 4 by 100 metre relay. It was so exciting to see Andre de Grass reach for the finish line, only to end up 2/100 of a second behind the American runner. But then the news! The Americans were disqualified because of how they passed the baton and the Canadian quartet won a bronze medal – de Grass' third of the Olympics, leading some to anticipate him as the heir apparent to Usain Bolt.

It was clear from this race that how the baton is passed on to the next runner really matters. You cannot do it any old way.

Well if that is true of a race that lasts for less than a minute how much more important is how we pass on the faith generation to generation.

In today's reading from 2 Thessalonians St. Paul says there were some among this community who were disqualified because of their careless ways of passing on the faith. What was happening? There was increased persecution experienced by the Christians in Thessalonica and there were those either writing to the community and present in person declaring that this tribulation was an indication that the end was nigh at hand and thus the "Day of the Lord" had already arrived.

Not so says Paul. Don't allow those careless teachers unsettle you. Rather says Paul keep the goal of your life always before you and be equipped with the right gear to run the race of life carefully and intelligently.

Paul tells us life's goal is a calling that will result in obtaining the glory of Jesus. Listen to how he puts it:

***For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news.
So that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Our calling is to follow Jesus Christ. Through the proclamation of the Gospel – the Good News we know how to follow Jesus so as to obtain the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Think back to the qualifying heat of the men's 200 finals when Andre de Grass caught up to Usain Bolt and the Jamaican gave him that great smile. Here de Grass was sharing in the glory of Usain Bolt. In a way that can only be a comparison that is inadequate in capturing what it will be like to share in the Glory of Jesus, may I suggest it will be something similar. Those who are called will share in Jesus' victory so that we will experience the pleasure, encouragement and smile of the Saviour.

In order for us to run the race with purpose and direction so as to fulfil our calling St. Paul goes on to tell us the kind of gear we need in order to run the race of life carefully and intelligently.

So then brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

This word “tradition” hearkens back to the relay race. Traditions are passed down and need to be handled carefully. Within our Catholic understanding we know that the Good News was first shared orally and then written down in what we call the New Testament. But from there the writings had to be carefully transmitted and interpreted to subsequent generations so that the baton could be rightly passed on. This is called the Great Tradition. Scripture and Tradition together are called “The Deposit of Faith” Here in Thessalonians we have the first expression of the Deposit of Faith which in the Catechism is described this way:

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal.” Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age.”¹

“Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” (113)

“And [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching.”¹

As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.”²

When we allow for the Deposit of Faith to form the proclamation of the Good News we will know life’s goal – to share in the Glory of Jesus and be equipped with the right gear in the present to run the race of life carefully and intelligently.

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed., p. 26). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

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