

Public and Private Revelation

The Catholic Catechism states the following: *“No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it had not been completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries”* (CCC, 66).

In this article one discovers the progressive disclosure (explication) of public revelation. If, on the one hand, this article relates that Jesus revealed to us everything we need for salvation and no new “public” revelation (the Deposit of Faith) is to be expected, on the other hand, it affirms that not everything in the public revelation of Christ was revealed to us “explicitly.” Concerning Jesus’ unexplicated doctrines, I recall Jesus’ words to his disciples before departing from this world: *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will teach you all the truth”* (Jn. 16:12).

Church documents of the past 2,000 years further testify to the continuing, ongoing disclosure of public revelation, as they never state that revelation has “ended” with Christ, but rather that Christ’s public revelation is “complete.” Unfortunately the 19th-century employment of the word “end” in actual fact is a very unfortunate rendering of the Latin *compleo*, which the Church employs to describe Christ’s public revelation. In fact, *compleo* doesn’t signify “end” at all, but instead it means the foundation of revelation that in Christ is constituted once and for all. Indeed, revelation occurs through the official teaching voice of the Church (Magisterium) as well as through the office of prophet (through whom the Church today receives private revelations) whom St. Paul lists immediately after the office of apostle: “God has appointed in his Church first apostles, *second prophets*, third teachers, fourth miracles...” (1 Cor. 12:28).

This is one of the many reasons why the Church's "private" revelations (also known as post-biblical prophetic revelations) – while not essential to our salvation, nevertheless valuable for our sanctification – are of importance today, as they constitute the continuing and ongoing unfolding of Christ's "public" revelation. Their importance is witnessed in the spiritual consequences that would have ensued if the Church ignored them: Had the Church ignored the private revelations of St. Margaret Mary we would neither have today's promise of the grace of final perseverance through the observance of the first 9 Friday's of each month, nor the Feast of the Sacred Heart; had it ignored the private revelations of St. Faustina we would not have the Feast of Divine Mercy that grants a total remission of all sin and punishment; had it ignored the private revelations of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta we would not have God's greatest gift to the Church, i.e., Living in the Divine Will that bequeaths to the soul on earth the same interior union with God's Will as enjoyed by the saints in heaven.

In sum, while "public" revelation refers to that period of the Church when Christ proclaimed the Good News of salvation of which the apostles bore written testimony, and that is forever constituted and normatively witnessed in Scripture, "private" revelations explicate public revelation with a new message from Christ to the churches today that is rooted in Tradition. The renowned theologians Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, Urs von Balthasar, René Laurentin and Karl Rahner agree that revelation "never ends," and that with Christ and the apostles such revelation is "materially" fulfilled in him and normatively transmitted by the apostles in the form of Scripture. However, since with the course of the centuries there are new times and circumstances, and God continues to reveal himself to his Church in every age, revelation that was materially fulfilled with Christ always requires a new "form," and this form is often the written testimony of many of today's prophets, such as Luisa.