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Guarding the Deposit of Faith

- “Do you resolve to guard the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt, as handed down by the Apostles and preserved in the Church everywhere and at all times?”
- This is the continuation of the “*duc in docendo!*” we focused on before lunch. Whereas preaching is outward, liberally sharing with others as of the first importance the gift we have received, this is more conservative, literally guarding, protecting, preserving, shielding, safeguarding that treasure so that we can still give it to others. Whereas preaching is going on offense, this is defense. It’s protecting the gift.
- This is, I believe, one of the most challenging of the resolutions a bishop makes today.
 - There are many, outside and inside the Church, are trying to add or subtract to the deposit.
 - On the outside, we have: those trying to change the Church’s teaching on the importance of the Sacraments of Baptism, of Confession, of Sunday Eucharist, of the Anointing of the Sick, who are trying to change the matter of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, on the duty to care for the poor, for immigrants, for the sick, for the environment, on the importance of original differentiation, on marriage, family, murder (in abortion, euthanasia), adultery, fornication, sodomy, pornography, contraception, to name just a few.
 - On the inside, we have extraordinary religious illiteracy, we have Catholic colleges and universities who to prescind from the rule of faith out of reasons of academic freedom, we have theologians, priests and religious, catechists and Catholic school teachers, moms and dads, godparents and grandparents who are teaching a “different gospel” than the one we inherited, passing on what they would like to be the truths of faith rather than the real ones. In many cases, what we’re dealing with is what the scholastics called “material heresies,” but there are also “formal heresies,” too, from people who judge the deposit of faith to be erroneous, harmful and even wicked. We also have on the inside the consequences of the loss of trust in Church teaching because of the damaged credibility of episcopal and priestly teaching authority due to the sexual abuse crises. And we likewise need to state candidly the added challenge of the way Pope Francis is exercising his teaching office, giving interviews to 90 year old atheist journalists without tape recorders, or giving interviews late at night on airplanes after grueling foreign visits, all the while being someone who himself admits he not only prefers but is much better in teaching by example than he is teaching by words. Over the course of time since we were ordained deacons, we got used to the system of the Popes’ teaching clearly, with statements being vetted and footnoted and integrated clearly in what has come before, and pastors on the ground echoing it, and when the circumstances justly warranted it, helping people to understand those circumstances when, because of other truths in the deposit of faith, it might not apply in the way generally intended. Now we have a circumstance in which the Pope regularly talks of exceptions, putting pastors and especially bishops who have resolved “to guard the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt” in the situation that we need to remind people of the rule and risk seeming to contradict many in the media and among Catholics think that the Pope said. The last thing I’d mention is the present phenomenon of people around the Pope who seem to have his ear, or who claim to be passing on something he said, that is not in line what the deposit of faith, or, on the other hand, interpreters who are convinced the Pope himself is not Catholic, treat their inferences of things the Pope wrote and said as having clear and univocal ruptures with the deposit and are unwittingly undermining the Church’s teaching authority in general as they try to undermine Pope Francis’.
 - Let’s face it. It’s not easy. I honestly doubt that when you pronounced your resolve “to guard the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt, as handed down by the Apostles and preserved in the Church everywhere and at all times” that you thought then that the fulfillment of that commitment could be

so dramatic and demanding! But that's what God in his wisdom called you to, in creating you when he did with the vocation as a successor to the apostles. It's a task that might get a bishop to grow to appreciate more the Book of Jeremiah and all of his complaints!

- Cathedra of the Bishop.
 - Symbol of the Munus Docendi and the teaching office of the bishop.
 - PG 34. The Bishop, while carrying out his ministry of sanctification in the whole Diocese, has as his focal point the Cathedral Church, which is as it were the Mother Church and the center of convergence for the particular Church. The Cathedral is the place where the Bishop has his Chair, from which he teaches his people and helps them to grow through his preaching, and from which he presides at the principal celebrations of the liturgical year and in the celebration of the sacraments. Precisely when he occupies his Chair, the Bishop is seen by the assembly of the faithful as the one who presides in loco Dei Patris; and it is for this reason, ... that, according to an ancient tradition of both East and West, only the Bishop may sit on the episcopal Chair. It is the presence of this Chair which in fact makes the Cathedral Church the physical and spiritual centre of unity and communion for the diocesan presbyterate and for all the holy People of God.
 - PG 28. Every Bishop, especially when he is seated in his cathedral before the faithful and exercising his role as a teacher in the Church, must be able to repeat with Saint Augustine: "With respect to the place which we occupy, we are your teachers; with respect to the one Master, we are fellow disciples with you in the same school." In the Church, the school of the living God, Bishops and the faithful are all fellow disciples, and all need to be taught by the Spirit. ... Whenever appropriate, Bishops must firmly defend the unity and integrity of the faith, judging with authority what is or is not in conformity with the word of God. The Synod Fathers also called the Bishops' attention to their magisterial responsibilities in the area of morality. The rules that the Church sets forth reflect the divine commandments, which find their crown and synthesis in the Gospel command of love. The end to which every divine rule tends is the greater good of human beings. The exhortation of the Book of Deuteronomy is still valid today: "Walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you" (5:33). Nor must we forget that the Ten Commandments have a firm foundation in human nature itself, and thus the values which they defend have universal validity. This is particularly true of values such as human life, which must be defended from conception until its end in natural death; the freedom of individuals and of nations, social justice and the structures needed to achieve it.
 - Chair of St. Peter: Part of the way we feed Christ's flock and tend (protect) that flock.
- Book of the Gospels in the Ordination Rite
 - "Receive the Gospel and preach the word of God with all patience and sound teaching."
 - JP II in PG 28. Here we see all the rich meaning of the gesture found in the Roman rite of episcopal ordination, when the open Book of the Gospels is placed on the head of the Bishop-elect. This gesture indicates, on the one hand, that the word embraces and watches over the Bishop's ministry and, on the other, that the Bishop's life is to be completely submitted to the word of God in his daily commitment of preaching the Gospel in all patience and sound doctrine (cf. 2 Tim 4). The Synod Fathers often stated that the Bishop is one who keeps the word of God with love and courageously defends it as he testifies to its message of salvation. The meaning of the episcopal munus docendi is rooted in the very nature of what must be preserved, that is, the deposit of faith.
- Several components to this resolution
 - Guard.
 - This doesn't permit silence, because the deposit is threatened from the outside and the inside.
 - It also doesn't just mean that the bishop himself not teach contrary to the faith, but that he defend the deposit from others.
 - It's an act of the Good Shepherd who is protecting the supply of the food of everlasting life, the font of living water.
 - Deposit of faith.

- CCC 84 The apostles entrusted the "Sacred deposit" of the faith (the *depositum fidei*),⁴⁵ contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. "By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practicing and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful."⁴⁶
 - CCC 97 "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God" (DV 10) in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.
 - Development of Doctrine, growth in making explicit what was implicit, but deposit remains in continuity, not changed.
 - Everywhere and at all times.
 - This is in the wide gamut of the areas of the *munus docendi*.
 - Apostolorum Successores, the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, lists many different areas:
 - Ministry of the Word of God
 - Theologians
 - Catechists
 - Social doctrine of the Church
 - Religious formation in Schools
 - Catholic Universities
 - Means of Social Communication
 - Catholic Media
 - Media in general
 - Social Media
 - Books
 - Entire
 - Can only do this if one knows it with precision. This is a challenge. It requires a lot of work. St. Ambrose didn't know anything when he was elected Archbishop of Milan while still a catechumen. But he immediately began studying with a learned priest and never stopped. Became a doctor of the Church, starting late in life.
 - Scripture
 - Tradition.
 - Handed down in a Marian way. In a pre-papal work, *Seek that which is above*, the future Pope Benedict expanded on what we can learn from Mary's assimilation of the Word:
 - Luke ... stressed one particular feature of the picture of Mary that was important to him, ... when he says three times that Mary kept the word in her heart and pondered it. First of all, she is portrayed as the source of the tradition. The word is kept in her memory; therefore she is a reliable witness for what took place. But memory requires more than a merely external registering of events. We can only receive and hold fast to the uttered word if we are involved inwardly. If something does not touch me, it will not penetrate; it will dissolve in the flux of memories and lose its particular face. Above all it is a fact that understanding and preserving what is understood go together. If I have not really understood a thing, I will not be able to communicate it properly. Only by understanding do I receive reality at all; and understanding in turn, depends on a certain measure of inner identification with what is to be understood. It depends on love. I cannot really understand something for which I have no love whatsoever. So the transmission of the message needs more than the kind of memory that stores telephone numbers: what is required is a memory of the heart, in which I invest something of myself. Involvement and faithfulness are not opposites: they are interdependent. In Luke, Mary stands as the embodiment of the Church's memory. She is alert, taking events in and inwardly pondering them. Thus Luke says that she "preserved

them together” in her heart, she “put them together” and “held on to them.” Mary compares the words and events of faith with the ongoing experience of her life and thus discovers the full human depth of each detail, which gradually fits into the total picture. In this way faith becomes understanding and so can be handed on to others: it is no longer a merely external word but is saturated with the experience of a life, translated into human terms; now it can be translated, in turn, into the lives of others. Thus Mary becomes a model for the Church’s mission, that is, that of being a dwelling place for the Word, preserving and keeping it safe in times of confusion, protecting it, as it were, from the elements. Hence she is also the interpretation of the parable of the seed sown in good soil and yielding fruit a hundredfold. She is not the thin surface earth that cannot accommodate roots; she is not the barren earth that the sparrows have pecked bare; nor is she overgrown by the weeds of affluence that inhibit new growth. She is a human being with depth. She lets the word sink deep into her. So the process of fruitful transformation can take place in a twofold direction: she saturates the Word with her life, as it were, putting the sap and energy of her life at the Word’s disposal; but as a result, conversely, her life is permeated, enriched and deepened by the energies of the Word, which gives everything its meaning. First of all it is she who digests the Word, so to speak, transmuting it; but in doing so she herself, with her life, is in turn transmuted into the Word. Her life becomes word and meaning. That is how the gospel is handed on in the Church; indeed, it is how all spiritual and intellectual growth and maturity are handed on from one person to another and within mankind as a whole. It is the only way in which men and mankind can acquire depth and maturity. In other words, it is the only way to progress.

- Incorrupt
 - Don’t let corruption in.
 - The munus docendi is supposed to be the bishop’s salt.
- Handed down by the apostles and preserved in the Church
 - We’re in living continuity, not just in the laying on of hands, but in the transmission of the treasure of the word.
 - Grounding it in what has come before and what will come after.
 - We are heirs of a treasure.
 - Importance of giving the next generation the whole of the faith, so that the faith remains alive.
 - Giving it in a way that can be received.
 - Pastoral letters.
 - Videos.
 - Newspaper columns.
 - Podcasts
 - The secular media
 - Don’t always have to do it all by oneself. Can recruit people to help. Archbishop Chaput. Bishop Conley.
 - Bishop Justs. Latvia. Focuses on the transmission of doctrine.
 - Bishop Anton Justs of Jelgava Latvia, in one very moving intervention during the 2008 Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, talked about the treasure of the Word of God and the joy of being able receive it.
 - “In my presentation,” Bishop Justs began in simple, straightforward English, “I would like to talk about the martyrs of twenty century and in particular those in my country Latvia These are the priests, men and women who died for proclaiming the Word of God.
 - “ I remember one Latvian priest, Viktors, who during the Soviet regime in Latvia was arrested for possessing the Holy Bible. In the eyes of the Soviet agents the Holy Scriptures were an anti-revolutionary book. The agents threw the Holy Scriptures on

the floor and ordered the priest to step on it. The priest refused and instead knelt down and kissed the book. For this gesture the priest was condemned to ten years of hard labor in Siberia.

- “Ten years later, when the priest returned to his parish and celebrated the Holy Mass, he read the Gospel. Then he lifted up the lectionary and said: “The Word of God!” The people cried and thanked God.”
 - The Word of God, they knew, was a treasure worth suffering for, even the tortures of a decade in a brutal Siberian labor camp. It was worth getting down on one’s knees to kiss. It contained within the open secrets of a true and definitive revolution. Fr. Viktors clearly knew the value of the Word of God and became a living witness to its inestimable value.
 - He was not alone in this testimony. “In Latvia, during the Soviet era,” Bishop Justs continued, “no religious books, no Holy Scriptures, no catechisms were allowed to be printed. The reasoning was: if there is no printed Word of God, there will be no religion. So our Latvian people did what the first century Christians did: they learnt the passages of the Holy Scriptures by heart.
 - Still today in Latvia there is an oral tradition alive. We stand on the shoulders of our martyrs to proclaim the Word of God. Our grandchildren remember their grandfathers and grandmothers, who died for their faith; they want to be, in their turn, heroes of faith. In Latvia we proclaim the living Word of God! We go in the processions and on the pilgrimages, we sing songs and we pray and say: ‘This is the Word of God,’ for which our grandparents died.”
 - A people learning Sacred Scripture by heart, taking the Bible on Pilgrimages, proudly proclaiming the Word of God, and seeking to be heroes in witness to it — this is what the Catholic Church is meant to be. As these faithful Latvians demonstrate, the Bible is not a dead document but a “living word,” since the Word of God is not principally a book or a series of books but a Person, an incarnate Word, whom we encounter through the Bible’s sacred words.
- Saints of the Munus Docendi
 - Ireneus.
 - Athanasius. Chrysostom. Leo the Great.
 - Thomas and the great teachers
 - Francis de Sales, Robert Bellarmine, the early Jesuits.
 - Japanese priests before Fr. Petitjean returned.
 - The Japanese Christians, catechized by the great St. Francis Xavier, learned from him the art of handing on effectively and fully the precious treasure of the faith. In addition to learning the sign of the Cross, prayers, and commandments, Japanese children, learned as well the lessons of how to remain faithful under persecution and even what prayers to say if they were selected to die for the faith. Example is always the greatest teacher and the young Japanese witnessed ten percent of the Catholics of the country heroically and faithfully die out of witness to the truth, and they could not help but be influenced by it.
 - The greatest testimony to the ability of the Japanese Catholics’ ability to transmit the faith, however, was seen only two centuries later. After a 42-year bloodbath, the persecutions ceased in 1639. Basically all the leaders — priests, religious and catechists — had been massacred. Most of the rest of the adults had apostasized, abjuring the faith lest they suffer the martyrs’ fate. The government had no fear of the thousands of Christian orphans they had made as well as the perhaps few Christian adults they had missed. They believed the Christian faith would die without teachers to pass it on, not to mention without Churches, bishops, priests, and sacraments. Christianity had been wiped out, they thought, just as they had intended.
 - For two centuries, from 1639-1854, Japan was closed to all foreign influence. The

few missionaries who succeeded in smuggling themselves into the country were quickly arrested and executed. In 1854, for economic reasons, Japan once again opened its borders to allow foreign businessmen to enter. The more Christian traders arrived in Japanese port cities, the greater they pressured the Japanese government to allow them to have tiny Churches to minister to their needs. The government acquiesced, but the Churches would be only for foreigners; they reminded the Japanese that Christianity was still illegal and punishable by death.

- In 1865, something happened that I think is one of the most moving scenes in the history of the Church. It is so gripping that I remember as if it were yesterday where I was when I heard it and what were the emotions that ran through me. I was a seminarian at the North American College in Rome listening to one of Msgr. Timothy Dolan's eloquent monthly rector's conferences. Msgr. Dolan combined his training as a Church historian with best talents of Irish storytelling. Even if his rector's conferences were not published in a great book, *Priests for the Third Millennium*, from which I'll quote below, I think I would have remembered most of the details.
- He told the amazing story related in diary entry of Fr. Bernard Petitjean, a French priest in the Society of Foreign Missions, who came to Nagasaki to serve the foreign businessmen. After celebrating a private Mass on March 17, 1865 about a month after consecrating the Church, Fr. Petitjean went to the Church door where he was met by a group of Japanese on the steps. I'll let Archbishop Dolan take it from here:
- "In a remote corner in the northeastern part of the country, Jesuit missionaries were flabbergasted to discover a tiny village where the hundred or so inhabitants gathered every Sunday to pray the Apostles' Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition, and recite the ten commandments and eight beatitudes.
- "Shocked, they asked the people where this custom came from, only to be told by the Japanese villages that, sometime in the distant past, men whom they called 'fathers' had taught those words to the people, and, anticipating their martyrdom, instructed the people to memorize those formulas and gather every Sunday to recite them together.
- "The 'fathers' had also assured them that, one day, other 'fathers' would return to teach them more about Jesus and his way. Ecstatic, the new missionaries blurted out, 'We are those fathers,' only to be met by a stony, suspicious silence. The village leader came forward. 'It has been passed down, too, that, when men come back claiming to be those "fathers," we must ask them four questions to be sure they are from the true Church.'
- "A bit nervous, the newly arrived priests responded, 'Go ahead. Ask us the questions.' The village leader came forward: 'When you enter your Churches, what do you do?' The Jesuits replied by demonstrating a genuflection, which was met by excited gasps from the crowd.
- "'Second, does your Lord have a Mother?' 'Yes,' assured the priests, 'and her name is Mary,' whereupon more electricity spread through the people.
- "'Where does the earthly leader of your Church live?' continued the village elder. 'In Rome,' answered the missionaries, as the crowd neared unrestrained joy.
- "'Finally,' anxiously inquired the chieftain, 'do your "fathers" have wives?' And, as the priests smiled and responded, 'No,' the villagers broke into a tumult, hoisted the missionaries on their shoulders and led them into the little church for they had not seen a priest for two-and-a-half centuries."
- So great was the trust in God and in his Church by those who were being killed in the 1600s that they prepared the people for the time when Catholic priests would return to Japan, and their simple instructions were passed down by the kakure

Kiristan, the clandestine Christians, for a dozen generations. They had the foresight to know that Protestant missionaries might be the first to arrive, and so they taught their children the four marks of the Church to distinguish between Catholics and Protestants: belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the importance of Mary, the papacy and the priesthood.

- Word quickly spread among the hidden Christians of Japan that their long advent for Christ to return to their country in the Eucharist was over. Within a month, on Good Friday, fifteen thousand Christians emerged from the villages and presented themselves before the priests in Nagasaki. Many of them would die for the faith again before Christianity was decriminalized in the 1880s.
- The joyous Christians said to the missionaries, “The heart of all of us here is no different than yours.” They were of one heart because they shared the love of Christ — a love that had never died over the course of 230 years.
 - St. John Paul II
 - Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict
 - So many Catholic bishops in our own country over the last 50 years, who courageously taught the truth and corrected falsities out of season. So many Catholic priests as well who did so even when it wasn’t popular. Today we have many, too, who are still doing so. Thank you, Bishops, for doing so.
- Parable of the Talents.
 - Mt 25:14-30: “It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one — to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.’ His master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, “Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’ His master said to him in reply, “You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’
 - Not buried, but invested with interest.
 - Master’s joy: How pleased the Lord was at this good and faithful service!
 - Courage, creativity.
- Christ asks anew, “Do you resolve to guard the deposit of faith, entire and incorrupt, as handed down by the Apostles and preserved in the Church everywhere and at all times?” We pray that all of us will, like the great saints of the Depositum Fidei, pass on that enormous treasure with interest!