Notes on Dei Verbum: theology as interpretation of scripture

Although God’s presence can be known by observing reality, truths about him can be known through scripture even in this life.

The Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel, which is the source of all saving truth. The Apostles designated bishops as their successors giving them the authority to teach (Apostolic succession and Episcopal succession). The apostolic preaching continues to our days as an unending succession of preachers.

As the preaching, experience, contemplation, and study goes on, there is a “growth in the understanding of the realities and words which have been handed down.” The Church “moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth.”

Sacred Scripture and sacred tradition: communication and interaction between them. Both are to be accepted and venerated.

“The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.” So the “teaching authority of the Church” (the magisterium) is added to the tradition and Scripture.

Scripture is divinely inspired. However, God speaks in Scripture through humans and in human fashion. Therefore “the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.”

In order to search for the intention of the sacred writers, one must pay attention to literary forms, “for truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse” (cf. early Franciscan writers!). Therefore one must understand all these genres and forms, as well as the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the texts (i.e., the task of Biblical and historical theology, as well as philology and literary analysis).