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The Role of Scripture and Tradition in a Believer’s Life
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Through Divine Revelation we can come to know God, understand His will, and participate in His divine nature.¹ This Divine Revelation is contained in both Scripture and Tradition.² “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God” (DV 10). Therefore, Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture should play an important role in the life of the believer, forming us and guiding us into participating in the divine life of the Trinity.

Roles of Tradition

There are several roles that Tradition should play in the life of a believer. One of those roles is that Sacred Tradition should shape how the believer lives his or her life. The believer is to actively practice the Tradition. This “living practice” contributes to the development of the Tradition itself (e.g., the Marian doctrines).³ In addition, actively living and practicing the Tradition is a form of “witness” and evangelization.⁴ This is important, because one of the roles of the believer is to ‘hand over’ and pass on the Sacred Tradition to others (DV 7–8).⁵

⁵ See also, Fichtner, "Tradition" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 135.
Tradition, as the living practice of the Church, also plays a role in the believer’s life through the liturgy. Christ communicates and interacts with us in a special way through the liturgy. In the liturgy the Sacred Scriptures are presented and “interpret[ed] in their original setting”. Thus the liturgy is especially efficacious at transmitting the Word, thereby helping the believer absorb the Word and commune with God. Sacred Scripture is to be interpreted in accordance with Sacred Tradition (PD 14). This is especially true because the meaning of Sacred Scripture can be obscure and somewhat hidden, and therefore the guidance of Tradition is needed for a correct understanding of Scripture (PD 14).

**Roles of Scripture**

There are several roles that Scripture should play in the life of a believer. One of those roles is that Scripture helps the believer understand Church doctrine. Just as Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are inextricably interrelated, Sacred Scripture helps illustrate for the believer Catholic doctrine (PD 17).

Just as Sacred Tradition should shape how the believer lives his or her life, Sacred Scripture should guide and direct the believer as well. Sacred Scripture reveals to us our supernatural orientation (PD 1), points us toward our final end (heaven or hell), and exhorts us to follow the path to God (PD 3), thus providing motivation to the believer. Sacred Scripture teaches the believer how to live. Scripture provides to the believer “examples of every virtue” and lessons on “morality and discipline” (PD 3). God, the author of Scripture (PD 1, 20), tells us

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9 *Cf.*, *Providentissimus deus*. 

that “All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Sacred Scripture plays a role in the life of the believer by helping her or him understand their true self (PD 5). Not only does Scripture help us understand ourselves, but studying Scripture also brings us closer to God Himself. In the words of St. Jerome, “To be ignorant of the Scripture is not to know Christ” (PD 3). Scripture should be used not only to strengthen our own communion with God, but also to bring others into a relationship with God. Scripture should be used by the believer to evangelize others, to spread and defend the Faith (PD 3). Moreover, it is the duty of believers who have expertise in any branch of knowledge (e.g., history, archeology, biology) to use their unique skills and expertise to defend the authenticity and correct understanding of Sacred Scripture (PD 22).

**Conclusion**

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture should play several different roles in the life of a believer. They should shape and guide the believer’s daily life, form the believer’s morals, and bring the believer closer to God. In addition, Sacred Scripture and Tradition provide the means and method through which the believer can evangelize others and spread the Faith.
References


