

CATECHISM NOTES

New Life in Christ. The starting point for any study of the Catholic Christian Faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not enough to just know information about Jesus. We must actually know Jesus personally, and commit ourselves to him fully. Only then do his teachings make sense to us, because only in Jesus and through Jesus and with Jesus can our lives make sense. Most of all, Jesus reveals to us our true selves and our real destiny as God intended it in love. Jesus makes a difference in how we understand our lives, and how we live our lives.

These Catechism Notes, while a helpful introduction to the Catholic Christianity, are not intended to be a complete manual of Catholic Christian thought. They are just a summary of some of the main themes contained in the official Catechism of the Catholic Church. The purpose of this document is to encourage people to study the complete Catechism and thus grow in a deeper understanding of the Catholic Christian Faith. Theology has been defined as “faith seeking understanding.” The Catechism also entails a commitment to making that faith practical in every day life as well. It starts with devout understanding, and it continues with loving action. As fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, let us make this journey of Christian Faith together in the heart and in the community of the Catholic Church.

Section 1: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES CHRIST MAKE IN HOW I UNDERSTAND WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT?

THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Revelation and the Existence of God (The Purpose and Meaning of Life)
2. Creation and the Fall (What Went Wrong with Humanity and Why We Need God)
3. The Old Testament Scriptures (God Reveals His Plan for our Salvation)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Coming of Christ (God Fulfills His Plan of Salvation for the World)
2. The Holy Spirit (God’s Plan Continues to Unfold in our Spiritual Lives)
3. The New Testament Scriptures (Apostolic Teaching Guides Us Still)
4. The Final Frontier of Eternity (The Fulfillment of this Life in the Next)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. The Church Community (Christ Founded a New Community of Faith)
2. Tradition and History (Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium together)
3. The Church in Heaven (Awaiting the Resurrection at the End of Time)
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Section 2: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES CHRIST MAKE IN HOW I LIVE OUT MY DAILY LIFE?

THE MORAL LIFE

1. Following Christ (The Moral Life for a Full Life)
2. God and the Family (Commandments 1-4)
3. Persons and Things (Commandments 5-8)
4. A Change of Heart (Commandments 9-10 and the Virtues)
5. Being a Catholic Christian (Precepts of the Church)

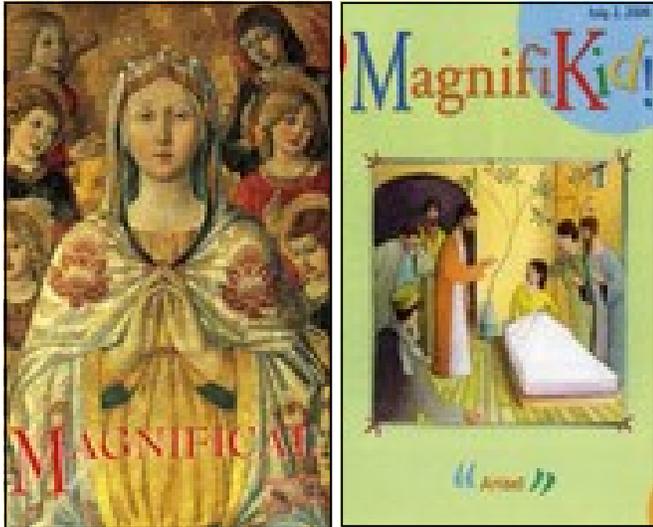
THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. Sacramental Prayer (Liturgy, Meditation, and Contemplation)
2. Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism and Confirmation)
3. Sacrament of the Eucharist (The Source and Summit of Prayer)
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Section 3: APPENDIX OF OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

1. Daily Prayers for Catholic Christians (Prayers for Daily Life)
2. Mass Prayers: The Liturgy of the Word (Order and Responses)
3. Mass Prayers: The Liturgy of the Eucharist (Order and Responses)
4. Meditation: The Marian Rosary (Catholic Christian Meditation Forms)
5. Contemplation: The Jesus Prayer (Catholic Christian Contemplation)





Magnificat, a monthly prayer book, provides all the daily Mass readings and prayers. It also contains prayers for the morning and evening, meditations for each day, and much more. A complimentary copy is available online at Magnificat.com, along with information concerning subscriptions. Information about **Magnifikid**, a special edition for children, is also available. For many people, this is the only prayer book they need to develop their daily prayer life.

Liturgy of the Hours. The Mass is the most important part of the Church's Liturgy, but there is also the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrated throughout the day as well:

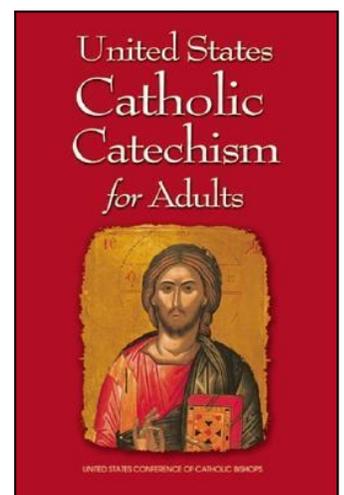
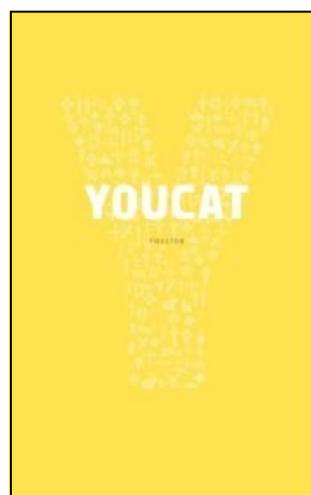
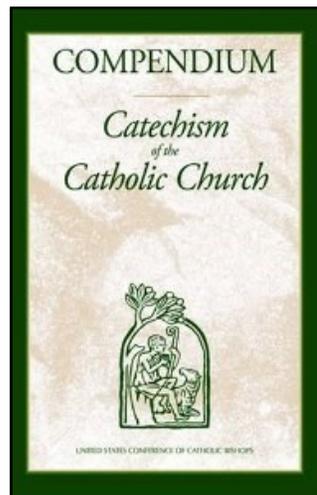
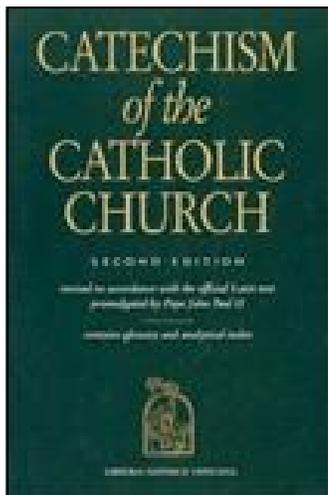


- Office of Readings (Matins)
- Morning Prayer (Lauds)
- Daytime Prayer (Terce, Sext, and None)
- Evening Prayer (Vespers)
- Night Prayer (Compline)

The complete version of the **Liturgy of the Hours** comes in four volumes. Although required of priests and deacons, it is recommended for all Catholics. There are several other versions of the Liturgy of the Hours as well, including eBreviary.com, a special online version of the Liturgy of the Hours, which is very user-friendly.

For those who cannot join in these prayers, one may pray the **Marian Rosary** or the **Jesus Prayer**. Whatever form of personal prayer a person uses, it should lead us more deeply into the spirit of the Liturgy, which is the source and summit of our faith.

Let us sing the praises of God in prayer each day, and remember all our loved ones in prayer as well!



For a comprehensive summary of Catholic Christian teachings, there are four recommended Catechisms to study:

- The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** is an encyclopedia of information about Catholic Christianity.
- The **Compendium to the Catechism** is a summary of the Catechism in question and answer format.
- The new **YouCat** is a practical edition of the Catechism for World Youth Day, that is, for young adult Catholics.
- The **United States Catholic Catechism for Adults** is a summary of the Catechism by the American Bishops.

In addition to these excellent books, CatholicsComeHome.org provides many helpful resources for growth in faith. Please also check out CatholicChristianity.org as a spiritual resource for your faith journey as well.

THE OLD TESTAMENT 1: Revelation and the Existence of God

The real question is not whether there is a God, but rather, which "god" a person chooses to have. Everyone has some kind of "god" — someone or something that they make the center of their life. How many and what kinds of "gods" do you have? How many times have you "changed" your gods and why? Come and worship the one true God! Come and join the Catholic Church!

None of the "gods" people invent can actually provide an ultimate meaning and purpose to life. The very fact that people move from one "god" to another, shows that they are searching for a real God who can give ultimate meaning and purpose to their lives. The good news is that there really is a true God who has witnessed our search for ultimate meaning and purpose in life — and who has been revealed to us in many ways:

First of all, we can come to know about the true God indirectly by considering the beauty and order of the universe. It did not come about by accident. Only an intelligent Supreme Being could have created and organized it. As the Creator, such a God would be superior to that creation in every way: God would be beyond the confines of time (eternal) and space (immaterial and all-present). This God would also have to be infinite in knowledge (omniscient) and unlimited in power (almighty).

Secondly, God has been revealed in human history, especially in the historical experience of the Jewish people. To them has been revealed God's name (Yahweh), God's merciful love (forgiveness), God's commandments (the Decalogue), and God's power (deliverance from Egypt). The Old Testament of the Bible is a record of God's revelation to the Jewish people. It is the prologue to God's full revelation of his divine existence in the New Testament.

Thirdly, God has made himself known to us fully in the person of Jesus Christ. In the life and teachings of Christ we can come to know about God mostly fully: especially through the New Testament Scriptures and the living Tradition of the Church community that Christ established.

Fourthly, we can come to know God through other human beings whose lives have been changed by their faith in God. Observing the difference Jesus Christ makes in the lives of those who believe can be a very persuasive demonstration of God's existence and power. We come to know God, then, through the people of the Church, its sacred Tradition, and the ministry of its ordained leaders.

Finally, we can come to know God most intimately by opening our hearts to God in faith, and making a personal commitment of our lives to Christ as our savior. This personal experience of God is one of the greatest blessings of the Christian faith, and the goal of Christian existence.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *Youcat*. You may also want to check out www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



The main altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

THE OLD TESTAMENT 2: Creation and the Fall

God is responsible both for the creation of the world and for its continued existence as well.

- How God created the world is a speculative question. Even science is at a loss to fully comprehend this reality.
- That God did it is the religious truth taught by the Scriptures and the Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church, from which we understand these matters rightly.

From the Scriptures we learn that God first created the heavens, that is, the spiritual universe. Beyond the dimensions of time and space, there is a state of supernatural existence. Some spiritual realities are well-known to all, such as thoughts or ideas, numbers (not to be confused with numerals), and will-power. None of these things are limited by time or space. They cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched, but they can be shared or observed in action. This is the world of spiritual realities, of which there are many examples.

The Scriptures also speak about personal spiritual beings, called angels, who like God are beyond the confines of time and space, but who unlike God are not omniscient and almighty. "Heaven" is used to describe that state of spiritual existence which is in unity and harmony with God. Some angels sinned against God through pride, and their state of alienation from God is called "hell."

From the Scriptures we also learn that God then created the earth, that is, the material universe. God did so to reveal goodness and beauty in a way that would prepare for the summit of creation, human beings. In mankind, the spiritual and material universes converge. Whereas angels are spiritual and the world is material, human beings are both, being a spiritual soul and a material body. God created mankind to know, love, and serve God and one another in this world, so as to be happy forever in the world to come.

But just as the angels had sinned against God through pride, so did mankind. Mankind misused the great gift of freedom by trying to be its own god. Although God had a plan for mankind's happiness, Adam and Eve tried to fabricate their own plan independent of God. Not only did mankind fail in this attempt (as every invention of any false "god" does), it alienated itself from one true God, as did the fallen angels.

This is called Original Sin not only because it was the first sin, but also because all our own personal sins find their origin in it. That is, we repeat the original mistake of trying to put ourselves before God. This alienation from God closed the gates of heaven to mankind, and brought further sin, suffering, ignorance, and death into the world. As a result of this sin, all of us are born with a "spiritual birth defect" that cripples us from doing God's will or working toward our best spiritual interests.

God, however, promised a Savior who would right the wrongs of humanity and restore us to our proper relationship with our Creator. The history of the Jewish people is a preparation for the fulfillment of that divine promise which came true in the person of Jesus Christ.

For more information . . . Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*. You may also want to check out the website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



THE OLD TESTAMENT 3: The Old Testament Scriptures

God's plan for mankind's salvation has unfolded throughout the centuries. It has been conveyed through the Tradition of believers and recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

To fully understand the meaning of the Scriptures, we need to read the sacred text within the context of the faith Tradition of those who recorded and preserved it.

Otherwise, we may be approaching the Scriptures out of context, that is, out of hidden assumptions and presuppositions that distort the Bible's real meaning.

The Old Testament of the Bible was compiled over many years in two separate editions, a Greek Septuagint Edition from Egypt, and a Hebrew Edition from Israel.

- The Greek edition was compiled about 200 years before Christ. It is called the Septuagint.
- The Hebrew edition was compiled about 97 A.D., and omitted seven books found in the Septuagint.

Since the New Testament (also written in Greek) quotes from the Septuagint, and since the early bishops of the Church quote from it, the Catholic Church accepts the Septuagint as the basis for the Old Testament collection of Scriptures. Thus, there are seven more books in the Catholic edition of the Old Testament than the Protestant edition of the Old Testament, and the Jewish edition of the Hebrew Bible. These seven books in question are called the deuterocanonical books by Catholics.

The **Scriptures of the Old Testament** are divided according to the following categories of books:

- The Law: the Pentateuch, or the books of Moses, that are the foundation of Old Testament thought
- History: various historical books describe how the Israelites lived out their faith throughout the centuries, with lessons for us in our own time
- Wisdom: ancient truths of timeless value for living each day to the best of one's ability and with the saving help of God's grace
- Prophets: the challenging messages of those who prepared the way of the Lord through their courageous words and deeds

The **Salvation History** recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures cover the following general eras:

- Creation, the Fall of Mankind, and the Proto-Gospel
- Noah and the Ark, and the forging of a New Covenant
- The Dispersion of the Nations at the Tower of Babel
- The Great Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- The Sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus: c. 1300 B.C.
- The Conquest of the Promised Holy Land by Israel
- The Kingdom: Saul, David and Solomon: c. 1000 B.C.
- The Decline of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah
- The Babylonian Exile of the Jewish nation: c. 500 B.C.
- The Restoration of Israel after the Exile in Babylon
- The Struggles for Jewish Independence: c. 200 B.C.

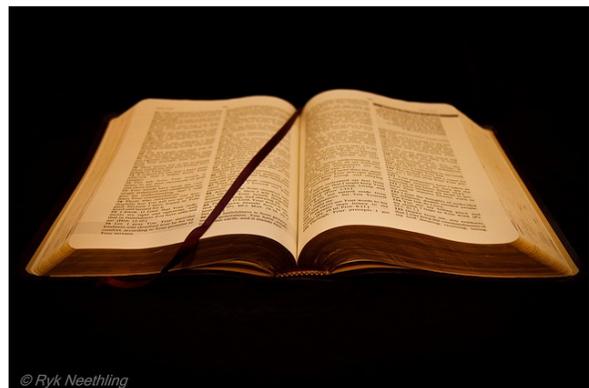
For more information . . .

Read the New American Bible in a study edition, for there are many explanatory notes for each book from a Catholic Christian perspective.

New American Bibles have the complete Old Testament, with all the "deuterocanonical" books that are not found in other editions of the Bible.

Join a Catholic Bible Study course to accurately learn more about the vital role of the Scriptures in the life of the Church that collected and endorsed them.

Also, please take time to check out the various editions of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that put these biblical teachings in their proper context.



THE NEW TESTAMENT 1: The Coming of Christ

God's promise to send us a Savior came true in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is God himself become human in the **Incarnation**, like us in all things but sin. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. We celebrate that birth on **Christmas**.

Jesus preached the coming of God's kingdom, and urged all to repent of their sins and return to God's ways. He attracted many disciples through his preaching and healing. From among these disciples he chose twelve apostles to be the leaders of his Church, with Peter, the first pope, as their head.

Jesus' message about the kingdom of God was misunderstood by some as blasphemy against God and treason against the Roman Emperor. For the reason of treason he was crucified by the Romans. Jesus willingly accepted this unjust sentence as the means by which he would atone for our sins and restore our relationship with our creator.

On **Good Friday**, Jesus offered himself upon the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Thus he took upon himself, sinless as he was, the punishment due to us all because of our sins. Thereby Jesus satisfied the justice of God, who in his mercy provided this atoning sacrifice. He also conquered the power of death by opening up a new future for mankind in eternity. Upon his death, Jesus preached the Gospel to the faithful just of the Old Testament, who awaited his arrival.

Jesus rose from the dead on **Easter Sunday** morning to lead us from the death of sin to new life in God. Jesus did not so much "come back" to life as to "go forward" into the fullness of life through his resurrection. By this he demonstrated, in his glorified body, that he came not only to save souls from damnation, but creation from all futility. His resurrection is the promise of our own resurrection with him at the end of time, when we too shall go forward into the fullness of life and enjoy the new creation.

On **Ascension Thursday**, forty days after Easter, we celebrate the return of Christ to heaven. He withdrew from our physical presence so that we might come to personal spiritual maturity and experience the guiding and motivating gift of his Spirit in our lives. Currently, this feast day is transferred to the following Sunday.

On **Pentecost Sunday**, fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the inauguration of the Church community, continuing the work of Christ on earth until his promised return in glory. The Holy Spirit guides the Church throughout the centuries, continuing the Sacred Tradition of the Apostles until the return of Christ in glory.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is located on the campus of the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is the seventh largest church in the world. St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is the largest church in the world.

Both churches are very worth a visit sometime in one's life, if one can!

THE NEW TESTAMENT 2: The Holy Spirit

In the person of Jesus Christ, God has revealed to us the innermost meaning of divinity which we call the **TRINITY**.

We learn from Christ that the one true God is a Trinity of three persons who are beyond us, with us, and within us.

The three persons of the Trinity work in union with each other in all things, that is, when one person works, all persons work together in unison.

- **God is FATHER:** God the Father is the CREATOR and sustainer of all that is, was, and ever will be. God is above and BEYOND US and all that exists.
- **God is SON:** God the Son is the SAVIOR of the world, God become human in the person of Jesus Christ, to be WITH US and to lead us to the fullness of our human destiny.
- **God is SPIRIT:** God the Holy Spirit is the ongoing source of SANCTIFICATION, that is, of holiness, goodness and motivation — God WITHIN US who accept, believe, and entrust ourselves to Christ as our Savior.

This **TRINITY** of three **persons** in one divine **nature** of God reveals divine love to us and for us as an integrated source of creation, salvation, and sanctification. The Nicene Creed, which we pray on Sundays, is a great testimony to this ancient teaching of Sacred Tradition that explains the words of the Apostles and their writings in regard to the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is the Trinity's personal presence in our lives today. This gift of God's powerful presence is called **GRACE**. God's grace is shared with us in faith through the community of the Church and in the sacramental prayers we celebrate together in Jesus' name.

- This grace **sanctifies** us by giving us a share in the divine life of God. Through faith we become dwelling places of God's Spirit. Sanctifying grace heals and restores our human nature in a new spiritual birth. We thus become acceptable to God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.
- This grace also **actualizes** us by giving us the strength to do the will of God, which by our own power alone we could not do. This abiding strength of the Holy Spirit actualizing our wills is called virtue, which is faith that is active in love.

We live a fully human life when we recognize and embrace our relationship to God as the Holy Trinity:

- We acknowledge our dependence on God as our Creator, through whom we continue to be.
- We return to a right relationship with God through the sacrifice of Christ as our Savior.
- We live our lives in holiness through the guiding power of the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier.

The fulfillment of our Christian life is our union with God in heaven, and our resurrection with Christ in the new creation at the end of time. But when we live a life of faith here and now, we can already begin to share in the joy of our fulfillment through the grace of God that is within us.

In the life of faith, therefore, we begin to share in a happiness that we can truly take with us when we die. Because our souls are immortal, our consciousness survives our physical death, and awaits the fulfillment of salvation in the Resurrection of the dead on the last day. For baptized Christians, that happy day has already begun in our hearts through faith.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, and the new youth catechism, *YouCat*. You may also want to check out www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church, who seek a deeper faith.



THE NEW TESTAMENT 3: The New Testament Scriptures

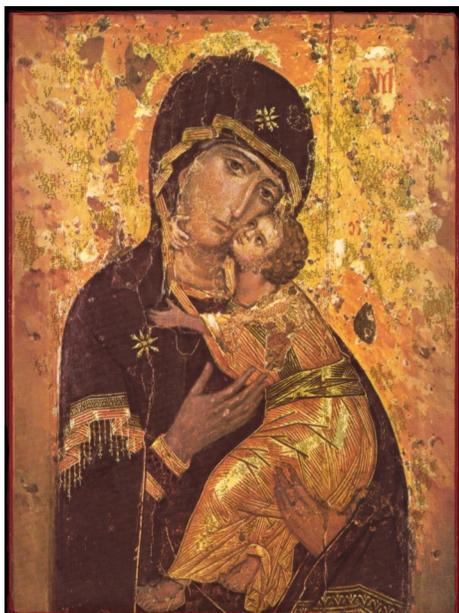
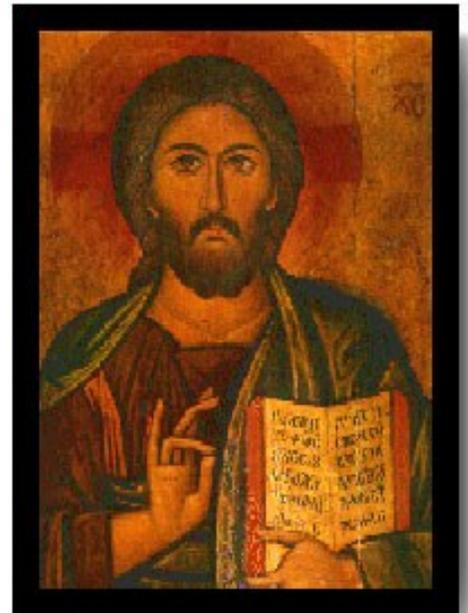
Even more than the Old Testament, the New Testament Scriptures are a book of the Church, by the Church, and for the Church. To fully understand these Scriptures, we need to read the sacred text within the context of the faith of those who wrote and compiled it under divine inspiration. The New Testament, like the Old Testament, is more of a library of books than a single volume. It is a library of sources for keeping in touch with the beginnings of the Catholic Church.

The New Testament was compiled over many years before being collected and bound in one volume. The gospels, for example, began as collections of the sayings of Jesus and the memories of his deeds. Only later were these collected and edited by the evangelists and their communities into the form we have today. The letters, on the other hand, are an edited collection of the correspondence between the apostles and early Church communities and their leaders. The Acts of the Apostles is a history of the early Church community, compiled by the author of the Gospel of St. Luke. The last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, is a specialized apocalyptic history of the Fall of Jerusalem and the persecution of the early Christians. It looks forward in hope to the ultimate triumph of Christ our God at the end of time.

The New Testament Scriptures are comprised of the following inspired texts:

The Gospel according to Matthew	Together these three
The Gospel according to Mark	are traditionally called
The Gospel according to Luke	the Synoptic Gospels.
The Gospel according to John	The Fourth Gospel
The Acts of the Apostles	Volume 2 of Luke's Gospel

The Letter of Paul to the Romans	The Epistles of St. Paul
The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	
The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	
The Letter of Paul to the Galatians	
The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians	
The Letter of Paul to the Philippians	
The Letter of Paul to the Colossians	
The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	
The Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	
The First Letter of Paul to Timothy	
The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy	
The Letter of Paul to Titus	
The Letter of Paul to Philemon	



The Letter to the Hebrews	Together these are called The "Catholic" or the "General" epistles
The Letter of James	
The First Letter of Peter	
The Second Letter of Peter	
The First Letter of John	
The Second Letter of John	
The Third Letter of John	

The Book of Revelation	The Apocalypse
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For more information . . .

Get a Catholic Study Bible, with the New American Bible translation.

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THE NEW TESTAMENT 4: The Final Frontier of Eternity

At our death, each of us will come into the presence of God for judgment. Our whole lives will appear before us in an instant, revealing even our most secret thoughts and actions. Many people who have had near-death experiences have reported this kind of phenomenon in which their whole life flashes before them. At this **particular judgment**, each of us will receive from God the consequences of the way we lived our lives.

- **Hell** is the self-deserved punishment of eternal separation from God for those who have already willfully separated themselves from God in this life by leading a seriously sinful and unrepentant way of life that is contrary to God's commandments.
- **Heaven** is the reward of eternal happiness for those who have truly repented of all their sins and made restitution for all their wrongs. In heaven they enjoy the company of God and his saints and angels as they await the resurrection and the new creation at the end of time.
- But what if a person has not rejected God by a seriously sinful life, or has not repented of all their sins, or have not made restitution for all their wrongs? What then? It is the position of the Catholic Church that these persons are indeed saved, and enter heaven as they are purified of their imperfections through the prayer of the Church. This experience of being purified at the gates of heaven is called **Purgatory**.

For more information . . .

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And what about those persons who have not heard the saving message of Christ or have been prevented from understanding it through no fault of their own, yet lead lives pleasing to God to the extent that their conscience informs them? Or what about children who die without the benefit of the sacrament of baptism?

There are two different theories in regard to these issues:

- The first is the theory of **limbo**, a place of eternal natural happiness that is separate from heaven. However, this theory is not widely held by Catholic Christians, as it was never declared an official doctrine of the Church.
- The second is the theory of **illumination**, whereby God grants such a person at the moment of death an opportunity to understand the truth of God, and to decide for or against the gift of salvation.

At the end of time, Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. This called the **Last Judgment**. All the dead will be resurrected to share in the fullness of their eternal destiny in the new creation.

We know neither the day nor the hour nor even the manner of Christ's return, but we can be assured that there will be no mistaking it when it actually occurs.

We understand that the reason why Christ has not already come, is to allow more people to come to share in this destiny through the missionary activity of the Church.

So, let us use the time that is ours to bring more people to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord!



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 1: The Church Community

The Catholic Church is the people of God founded by Christ under the leadership of the Apostles, and their successors, the Bishops — and in particular the Bishop of Rome, our Holy Father, the Pope.

The Church is also considered to be the Body of Christ, faithfully continuing the work of Christ on earth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit until the Lord's return in glory at the end of time.

All members of the Church have a vocation to be disciples of Christ, each according to the talents and abilities with which God has blessed them.

Within this general membership of the Church, there are the vocations of the Clergy and the Religious.

- The Clergy are ordained for permanent, public, sacramental leadership service in the Church.
- The Religious are members of special communities living under the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, so that they might give themselves entirely to the needs of the Church community.
- The Laity are all other baptized Christians who are the People of God, who live out their vocation in the world on the basis of their faith in Christ.

The community of the Church has traditionally been characterized by four spiritual marks of distinction.

- It is **ONE** in faith, one in worship, and one in government, in a continuity of Sacred Tradition throughout the centuries.
- It is **HOLY**, because the commandments of God set it apart from the ways of the world. It is also holy because through the sacraments it is nourished with divine grace.
- It is **CATHOLIC**, because its membership and its mission extend to all people of all times.
- It is **APOSTOLIC**, because it continues the apostolic message of the gospel, and because its leaders, the bishops, are the successors of the apostles in leadership of the Christian community.

These four marks of the Church are proclaimed in the Nicene Creed that we use at Sunday Mass. Reflecting on these four marks will help us to become better Church members and followers of Jesus Christ.

The mission of the Church to the world is threefold:

- To **TEACH** Christ's message faithfully. To accomplish this, Christ bestowed the gift of the Spirit to preserve the Church from error in the essentials of faith and morals. This special gift of the Spirit is called infallibility.
- To **BLESS** and strengthen believers with the grace of God through the sacraments. Since the grace of the sacraments is the lifeblood of the Church, Christ willed that the Church would endure for all time. This special gift of the Spirit is called indefectibility.
- To **LEAD** the world to Christ and serve mankind in Christian charity. To provide for good order in the community, Christ bestowed upon the Church the gift of leadership and authority. This is exercised through the ministry of the bishops, and especially through the bishop of Rome, the pope. The bishops lead the Church community in the place and by the command of the Lord until the Lord's return in glory at the end of time.

Together, let us lead the whole world to Jesus Christ!

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 2: Tradition and History

Christ promised to be with the Church always, even to the end of time. Christ has kept that promise to us through his gift of the Holy Spirit. The history of the Church community being led by the Holy Spirit is called Sacred Tradition. Tradition means more than just customs. Sacred Tradition is the lived experience of the Church community throughout the centuries, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Several important periods of Church history are:

- **THE AGE OF THE APOSTLES:** 33-100 A.D. Besides the New Testament, other Christian and pagan literature offer valuable information concerning this era.
- **THE PERSECUTIONS:** 100-315 A.D. This is the age of the martyrs who courageously underwent torture and death rather than give up their religious convictions concerning Christ.
- **THE PEACE OF CONSTANTINE:** 315-600 A.D. With the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, the Church became an important part of society, bringing many people to faith in Christ.
- **THE CONVERSION OF THE BARBARIANS:** 600-1200 A.D. In this second great missionary thrust, the gospel was preached to northern Europe and western Asia.
- **THE MIDDLE AGES:** 1200-1500 A.D. This was a time of consolidation in theology and a flourishing of culture and art. The great European cathedrals were built at this time. It was also the era of the crusades and the inquisition.
- **THE REFORMATION:** 1500-1965 A.D. Besides the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Reformation was a time of reorganization and reinvigoration of the Church, especially in its missions.
- **OUR PRESENT DAY:** 1965—. The conclusion of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 signaled a new age for the Church in the modern world. We are celebrating two millennia of Catholic Christianity with great fervor.

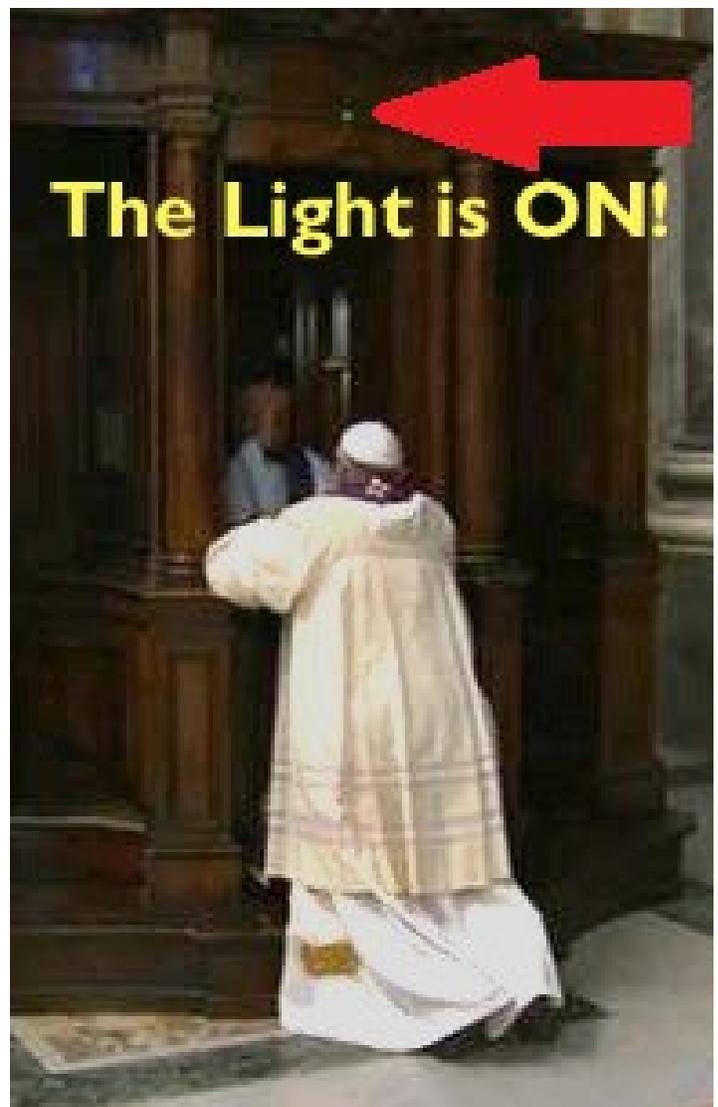
It is the historic position of the Catholic Church that, although other churches are not without the means to salvation, the fullness of what Christ intended the Church to be subsists in the Catholic Church alone. It is therefore our mission to bring the full Gospel to all the world.

For more information . . .

Please study one of the following documents:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
- the *Compendium to the Catechism*,
- the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*,
- or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



Pope Francis goes to confession himself, before hearing the confessions of others at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 3: The Church in Heaven

The Church exists in communion with all believers who have gone before us in faith. This Communion of Saints extends to those who are in the process of entering heaven (the souls in purgatory) and those who have already entered heaven (the saints). It also looks forward to the consummation of history in the general resurrection, the last judgment, and the new creation at the end of time.

We are all called to be saints, that is, holy people of God. We usually reserve the term "saint," however, for those who are certainly in heaven with God. The saints in this sense are models to inspire us and patterns for us to imitate. We venerate the saints. And, just as we ask others here on earth to pray for our special needs, we also ask the saints in heaven to pray to God on our behalf.

Among all the saints, we honor Mary as the most perfect Christian disciple. Because of her unique role in our salvation, God blessed her in many special ways:

- Since she was predestined to become the Mother of God, she was made worthy of this honor by being preserved from the stain of original sin -- this is called her Immaculate Conception.
- She conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit without human intervention and remained a virgin throughout her life.
- At the end of her earthly life, Christ took her to heaven in anticipation of the resurrection on the last day -- this is called her Assumption.

When one considers the fact that God took flesh from the Virgin Mary, these exceptional privileges are not only understandable but quite fitting and proper. Although some people claim to have had visions of Mary, these claims are not matters of faith that are binding in conscience on all Catholics. However, the Church doctrines about Mary are binding in conscience for all Catholics.

When we reflect on the glory of the saints who have attained their heavenly reward, we prepare ourselves for our own Passover into eternal life. We know that at his Ascension Christ went before us to prepare a place for us, the saints, in heaven. There we will await the general resurrection and final judgment at the end of time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

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This statue of St. Peter is located in the current Basilica of St. Peter. However, it is actually from the first Basilica of St. Peter that was built by the Emperor Constantine the Great in the fourth century. As you can see, it is placed at a level for everyone to appreciate and even touch. Let us pray for all the Popes, who are successors of St. Peter and leaders of his Church until Christ returns in glory.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH 4: Organizational Notes

The local Christian community is called a parish. Usually a parish is a territorial entity, but most parishes accept people who willing to become regular members of the parish community through attendance and support.

- The leader of a parish is a priest, called a pastor, who is appointed by the bishop. There may be some additional priests, called associate pastors, also assigned by the bishop. In many cases there are deacons who are ordained and assigned to the parish by the bishop as well — these might include married men from the parish community.
- The parish staff usually includes a parish secretary and bookkeeper, directors of religious education for youth and for adults, a youth minister, a principal if there is a grade school, and a person to coordinate home visits, etc.
- Parish organizations usually include societies for women and for men, for charitable and social events, and various other special groups for social and charitable service purposes.
- Parishes are grouped together into dioceses, under the leadership of a bishop. The bishop's church is called a Cathedral. The bishop's office provides general supervision of parishes and clergy, coordination of services and charities for the diocese, and educational and training programs.
- Several dioceses together form a province, with an archbishop as the chairman. The bishops of a country come together as a national conference.
- The pope is the bishop of Rome and the leader on earth of the entire Catholic Church. Cardinals are bishops who have the right to elect a new pope; they also serve as the pope's closest advisors. The pope's offices are located at the Vatican in the city of Rome. You should visit there someday!

For more information . . .

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Special information about our parish community may be found at www.StDaniel.org. Remember to:

- Officially register as a member of your local parish.
- Attend Mass each Sunday with your whole family.
- Study your parish website and talk with various parish leaders to learn more about your parish.
- Get involved in parish life. Join a parish organization and experience more of your parish!



The Vatican City State is one of the smallest but most influential entities in the whole world. From this church, the Pope leads the Catholic Church throughout the world, which is also the world's largest religion as well.



THE MORAL LIFE 1: Following Christ

As disciples, we follow Christ as our Redeemer, who died and rose so that we might die to sin and rise to new life in him. This unearned gift of **redemption** heals **original sin**, completes our human nature, and raises us up to a new and higher level of existence in Jesus Christ.

- **Sanctifying grace**, a free gift of God received through the sacrament of baptism, makes us just, holy, righteous, and acceptable to God as members of his holy people.
- **Repentance** is one of the results of this sanctifying grace. When we repent, we are forgiven the eternal punishment due for our sins, and obtain the pledge of eternal life in Christ.

As disciples, we also follow Christ as our conscience and guide for life. His teachings show us how to obtain eternal life, through the discipline of avoiding **actual sin** and growing in Christian **virtue** through faith and good deeds.

- **Actual grace**, a free gift of God, empowers us to cooperate with God in working out our salvation through a faith that is active in good deeds done out of love for God.
- **Penance** is one of the results of actual grace. When we do penance, we are forgiven the temporal punishment due for our sins, and grow further in Christian holiness and virtue.

Sin is being at odds with God, holding back from yielding our whole lives to Christ as our Lord. We can sin in our thoughts and in our words, in what we do and in what we fail to do. Sin seriously harms our relationship with God and can even destroy our relationship with God.

- **Venial sin** weakens our relationship with God, and eventually leads to more serious sins, if not checked in time. Venial sin can ordinarily be forgiven through prayer and restitution for the wrongs that we have done.
- **Mortal sin** breaks or destroys our relationship with God. We commit a mortal sin if we do something seriously wrong on purpose. Mortal sin is ordinarily forgiven through the sacrament of Penance which renews the grace of our Baptism into Christ.

We overcome sin by recognizing it, regretting it, confessing it, resolving to amend our lives, and by seeking to grow in God's grace and love. We have several aids to help form our consciences according to God's will:

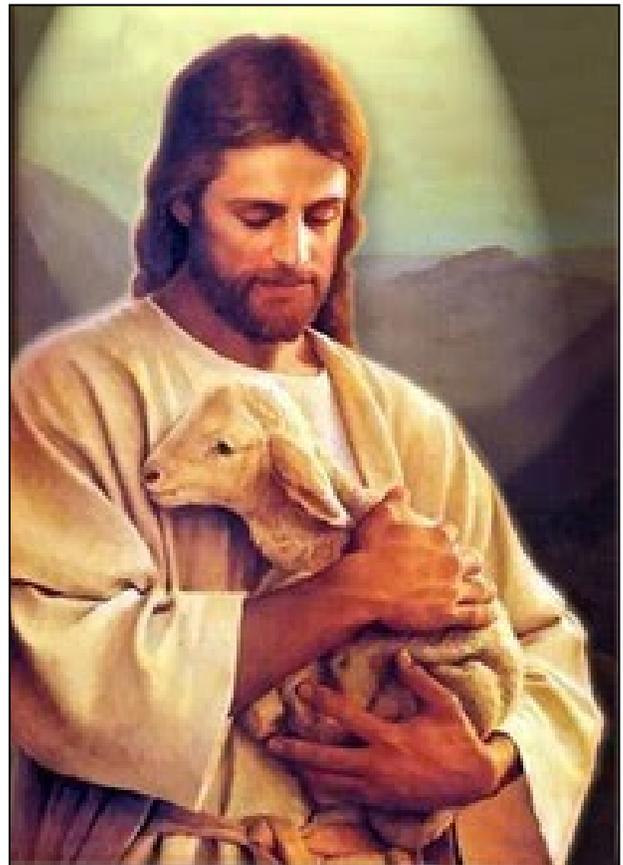
- our own natural sense of right and wrong (Natural Law),
- the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule,
- the personal example of Jesus, Mary, and the Saints,
- the grace of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments,
- the traditional wisdom of the Church community, and
- the official teaching of the ordained Church leaders.

In all these ways, we are supported in our vocation as disciples of Christ who are called to holiness of life.

For more information . . .

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THE MORAL LIFE 2: God and the Family

I. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. YOU SHALL HAVE NO FALSE GODS BEFORE ME.

We should love God above all else, believe what God has revealed, and trust fully in God's loving providence.

Therefore, it would be wrong to deny God's existence, to hold in doubt what God has certainly revealed, commit presumption or despair against God's providential love, practice superstition or idolatry, make any person or thing more important than God in our life, or fail to profess our faith in God before others by word and deed.

II. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.

We should speak respectfully about God and his Church; be reverent toward all sacred persons, places, and things; and honor our vows and oaths made to and before God.

Therefore, it would be wrong to swear, curse, blaspheme, commit perjury, break religious (including marital) vows, or commit a sacrilege against any sacred person, place, or thing.

III. REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY THE LORD'S DAY.

We should worship the Lord together with the Christian community at the appointed times, avoid unnecessary labor on the appointed days of worship, and strive to make the Lord's Day truly the first day of our week and the center of our prayer life.

Therefore, it would be wrong to miss Mass without a serious excuse on Sundays and Holy Days. It would be contrary to the spirit of the law to be merely present at worship without actively participating in it. We would fail in our duty to both Church and family if we allowed unnecessary work to take us away from time with them on the Lord's Day.

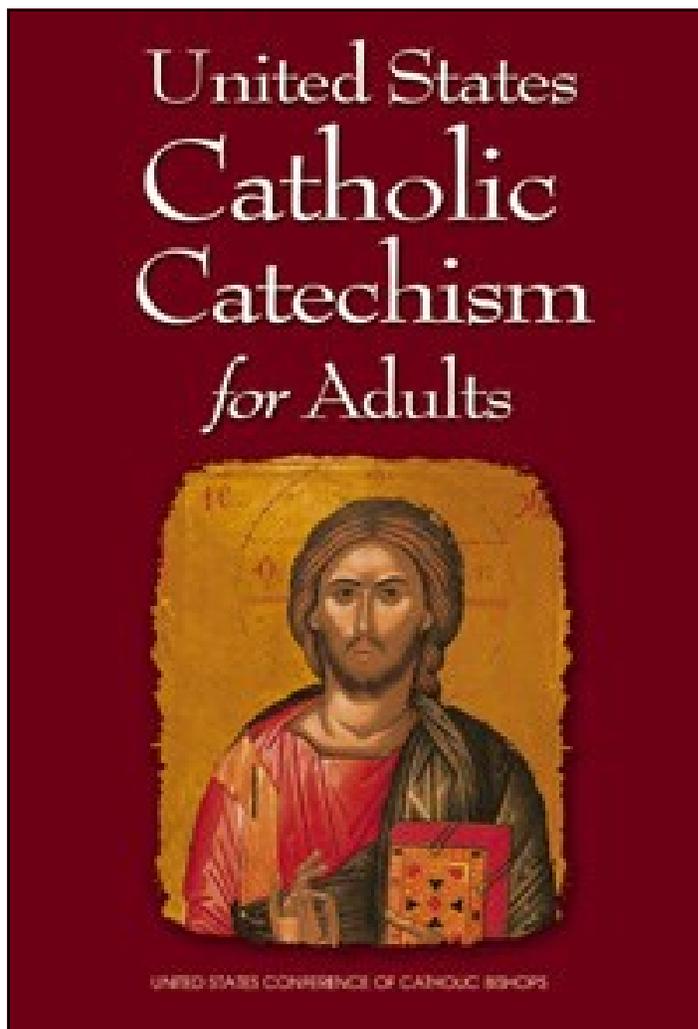


IV. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.

We should respect, honor, and obey our parents while we are under their care. As adults, we should respect, honor and care for our parents, especially when they are in need or advanced in years. We should obey all legitimate authority, both of Church and State, and be patriotic citizens of our country.

Therefore, it would be wrong for children to disobey their parents or anyone in authority over them. It would be wrong for anyone to show disrespect or disobedience to any lawful authority. Adults should not neglect to respect, honor and care for their elderly parents.

For more information . . . Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*. You may also want to check out www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.



THE MORAL LIFE 3: Persons and Things

V. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

We should promote harmony at home and in our community. We should respect all life from conception to natural death. We ought to take care of our health and safety and be concerned about the health and safety of others. We ought to give good example to others as well.

Therefore, it would be wrong to fight, harbor hatred or prejudice, seek revenge, to commit murder, suicide, abortion, euthanasia, or mutilation. It would be wrong to needlessly kill any living thing, to support the death penalty, to use harmful drugs without prescription, become intoxicated, or neglect our health and safety or that of others. We should not give bad example / scandal to others.

VI. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

We should always remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We should honor the sanctity of marriage and promote family values. We ought to grow in genuine decency, modesty, chastity, and personal purity.

Therefore, it would be wrong to be impure in thought, word, or deed, either by ourselves or with others. It would be wrong to engage in sexual relations outside of the sacred bond of marriage, to contradict either the life-giving or love-giving dimensions of human sexuality, or to divorce one's lawful spouse and marry another without a church annulment of the sacramental marriage vows.

VII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

We should respect what belongs to others, honor our just agreements and contracts, pay our just debts, do a full day's work for a full day's pay, and pay employees a just wage. We should promote fairness and justice in all our dealings with others, make restitution for any wrongs or injustices we have done or have been party to, and be charitable to others in need.

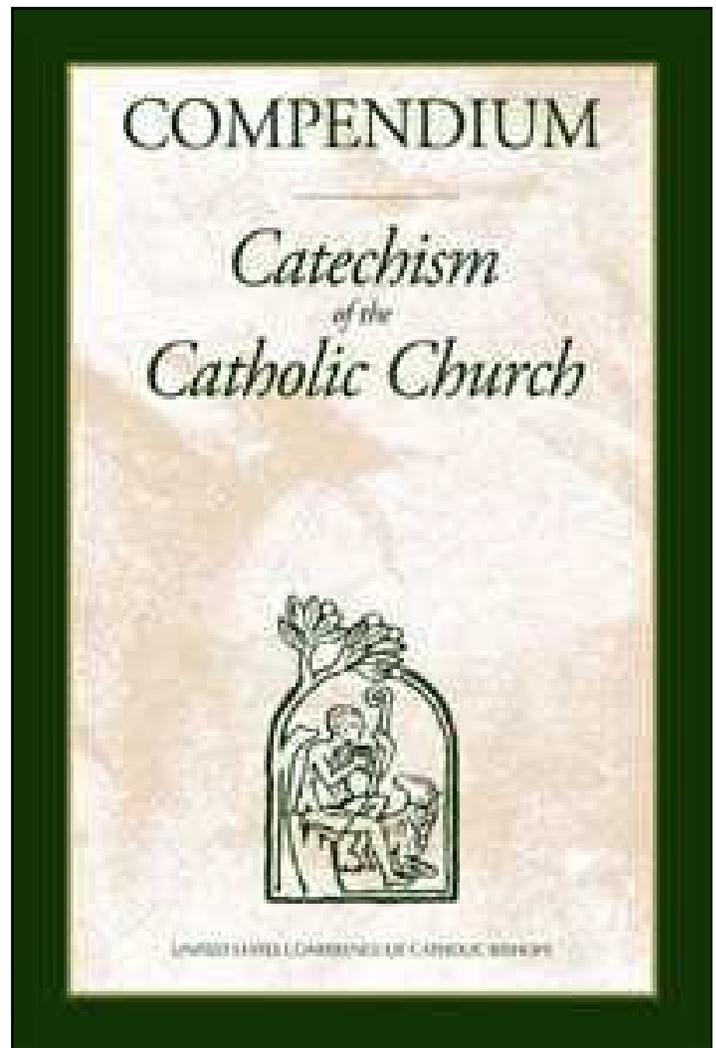
Therefore, it would be wrong to rob, steal, cheat, shoplift, vandalize, gamble our necessary assets, engage in bribery, or do careless work. It would be wrong to waste our resources — our time, our talents, or our treasures — or fail to make restitution for any wrong we have done, or in any way participated.

VIII. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

We should speak the truth in all matters, honor the good name of others, and respect the privacy of others.

Therefore, it would be wrong to lie, gossip (commit slander, libel, calumny, detraction), make harmful fun of others, or reveal secrets that we are rightly bound to keep.

For more information . . . Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*. You may also want to check out www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church. Finally, please check out ForYourMarriage.org for a Catholic perspective on marriage and family issues.



THE MORAL LIFE 4: A Change of Heart

IX. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

X. YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

We should avoid the occasions of sin, those circumstances which might lead us into sin even if they are not sinful in themselves. We should try to stop evil deeds at their root in the evil desires of our heart, especially in regard to sexuality and material possessions. Every sin is first an evil desire that becomes an evil action.

Therefore, we should strive to replace any evil desires we might have with truly Christ-like motivations.

THE VIRTUES

When we live by the Ten Commandments and Christ's Law of Love as our conscience, we are avoiding sin and growing in grace. Three virtues in particular give evidence to this spiritual growth:

- **FAITH** enables us to act according to what we believe rather than what the world, the devil, or others tell us to do.
- **HOPE** enables us to act with the confidence that God will be true to the divine promises made to us, and act with optimistic anticipation.
- **LOVE** enables us to give totally of ourselves to God and neighbor not just because we expect something in return, but because we love them for their own sakes.

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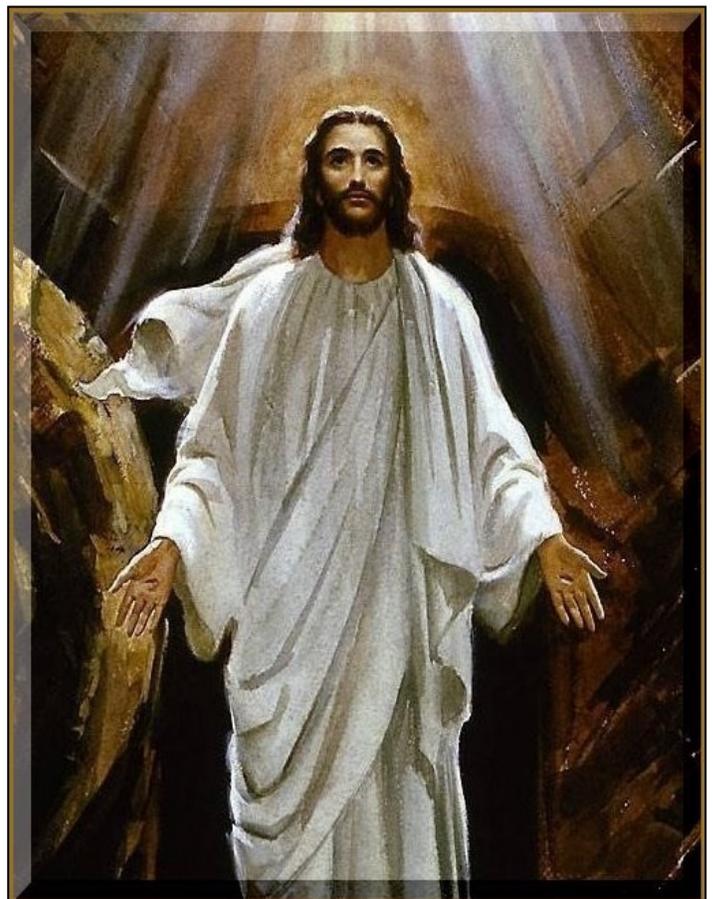
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There are four virtues which assist us in applying these commandments of God to particular circumstances that we encounter in our daily lives:

- **PRUDENCE** enables us to make wise judgments.
- **JUSTICE** enables us to seek fairness above all other motivations.
- **FORTITUDE** enables us to courageously follow our convictions in adversity.
- **TEMPERANCE** enables us to practice moderation in all things.

How, then, are we to live our lives? As Christians we are to follow Christ as our conscience and guide. It is not simply a matter of following our conscience -- but of having a correctly formed conscience to follow.

What is a properly formed conscience? One that is informed by the Law of Christ and the Church in determining right from wrong. Such a conscience will lead us to eternal life.



THE MORAL LIFE 5: Being a Catholic Christian

The Precepts of the Church help us to make the most of our church membership and lead a better Christian life:

- **To keep holy the day of the Lord's Resurrection: to worship God by participating in Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of obligation. To avoid those activities that would hinder renewal of soul and body on the Sabbath (e.g., needless work and business activities, unnecessary shopping, etc.)** The Holy Days in the United States are: each Sunday of the year, Christmas, New Year's Day, Assumption (August 15), All Saints (November 1), and Immaculate Conception (December 8). When some of these feasts fall on Saturdays and Mondays, however, they are still holy days, but not of obligation.
- **To lead a sacramental life: to receive Holy Communion frequently and the sacrament of Penance regularly — minimally, to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year (annual confession is obligatory only if serious sin is involved); minimally also, to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, between the first Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday.**
- **To study Catholic teaching in preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation, to be confirmed, and then to continue to study and advance the cause of Christ.**
- **To observe the marriage laws of the Church; to give religious training by word and example to one's children; to use parish schools and catechetical programs.**
- **To strengthen and support the Church: one's own parish community and parish priests, the worldwide Church, and the pope.**
- **To do penance, including abstaining from meat, and fasting from food on the appointed days.** Those over 14 should abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent. Those 18 to 59 should fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Specific instructions are publicized each year at the beginning of Lent.
- **To join in the missionary spirit and apostolate of the Church.** It is not enough to just belong to the Church. We are called to be the Church, reaching out to others with the gospel by word and example.

SUMMARY: To make the most of our church membership, we ought to:

- register as a member of our local parish community,
- participate in its prayer and social life, and
- support it with our time, talent, and treasure.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

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Dante's Paradise

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE 1: Sacramental Prayer

Prayer is the lifting up of our hearts and minds to God. We can pray alone or in a group, silently or out loud, using our own words or using common prayers. Whatever way we choose to pray, we should do it in order to praise, thank, and petition God, or to ask God's forgiveness.

We should pray regularly. Some suggested times are: each morning and evening, before and after meals, in time of joy or sorrow, and especially in time of temptation. God always hears our prayers, but he may not answer as we expect either because we have not prayed well, or because what we ask is not truly to our benefit or the benefit of others, in his divine wisdom.

There are many aids to prayer, called sacramentals: religious art, prayer books, the rosary, and the stations of the cross, to name a few. Although they are not a replacement for the sacraments, they help us prepare to celebrate the sacraments or to give thanks for receiving them.

There are many kinds of prayer: meditation, contemplation, adoration, private devotions, Bible reading, and spiritual reading, to name a few. The official, public prayer of the Church is called the Liturgy:

- The **Mass**, consisting of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist;
- The **Sacraments**, the seven special prayer celebrations of the Church, instituted in Christ as privileged moments of divine grace;
- the **Divine Office**, or Liturgy of the Hours, to sanctify the hours of the day with special prayers.

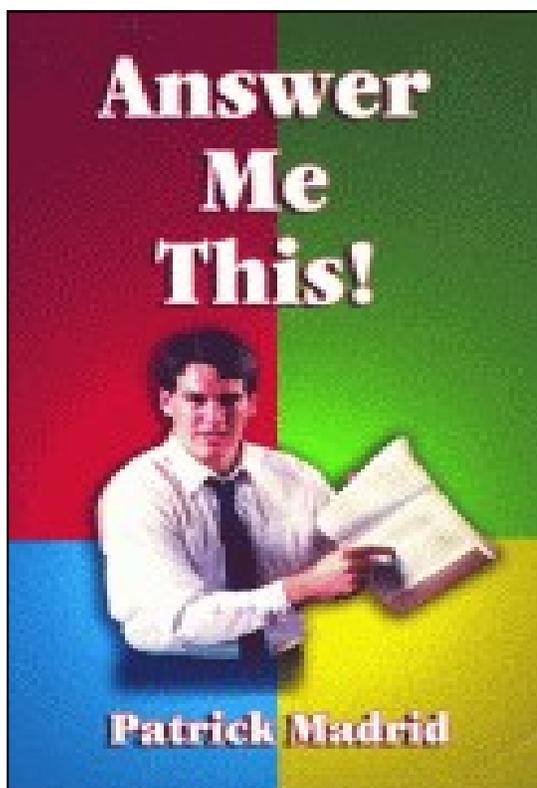
In order to celebrate our faith well, the prayer-life of the Church's liturgy is arranged according to special liturgical seasonal times throughout the year:

- **Advent** (about four weeks) and
- **Christmas** (about two weeks),
- **Lent** (about six weeks) and
- **Easter** (eight weeks), and
- **Ordinary Time** (the remainder of the year).
- Special **Feast Days** throughout the year commemorate holy persons and sacred events.

Prayer, however, is more than just saying prayers or having special liturgical celebrations. Prayer is life directed heavenward in a consciously reflective way. Prayer is also nourishment and inspiration for the soul. Finally, prayer is love in action, that is, faith active in loving concern for others. Prayer thus has many dimensions:

Prayer can emotionally, spiritually, and mentally center us on God. It can physically sensitize us to the needs of others through fasting and other sacrificial disciplines. And it can spread the joy of our inward relationship with God outward toward others in acts of charity. In all these dimensions, prayer can enable us to experience the love of God in our heart, soul, mind, strength — and in our neighbor as well as in ourselves.

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THE SPIRITUAL LIFE 2: Sacraments of Initiation

BAPTISM celebrates the beginning of our spiritual rebirth and membership in the Body of Christ, the Church. In baptism we enter into the mystery of Easter, that is, we die to sin and rise to new life in Christ. Thus, baptism celebrates the forgiveness of original sin and any personal sins we may have committed in our lives.

Adult baptism is preceded by a period of instruction called the Catechumenate. A sponsor prayerfully supports and vouches for the sincerity of a person preparing for baptism. Christian parents can present their children for baptism upon the pledge of raising them in the Catholic faith with the help of qualified godparents.

At a baptismal ceremony, we are either immersed or bathed in water as the priest or deacon says: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We are then anointed with Chrism, so that "just as Christ was anointed prophet, priest, and king, we may live as members of his body, sharing in everlasting life." Next we are clothed in a white garment as "an outward sign of our Christian dignity. With our family and friends to help us by word and example, we are to bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven." Finally we receive a candle, lighted from the Easter candle, with the admonition: "Keep the flame of faith always alive in your hearts, so that when the Lord comes, you may go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom."

Since our whole life from baptism onward is a preparation to meet our Maker, these same four baptismal symbols are used at Catholic funerals: water (to recall our baptismal cleansing), a white pall (for our baptismal garment), the Easter candle (for our baptismal enlightenment), and incense (instead of perfumed Chrism, as a sign of our Christian dignity as Anointed Ones).

For more information . . .

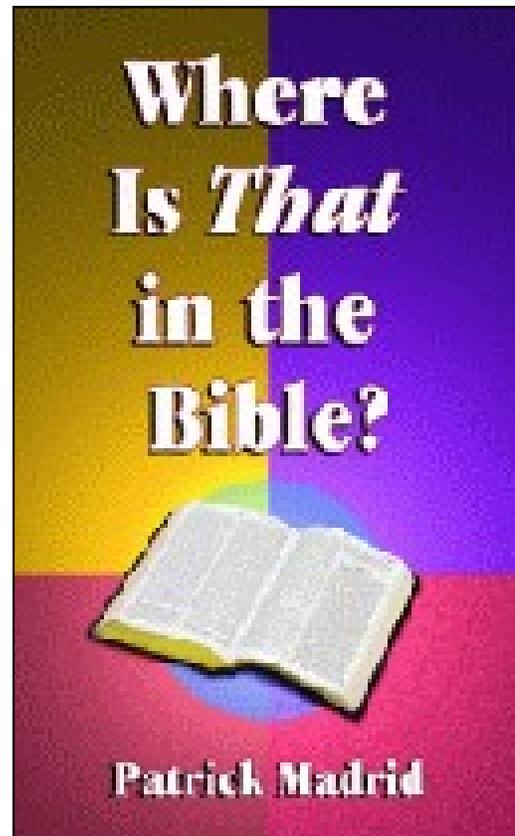
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CONFIRMATION seals our baptism with the seven-fold gift of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. Confirmation is also a personal affirmation of the gift of faith bestowed in baptism. Finally, it is our personal mandate to give witness to that faith before others as well.

At a confirmation ceremony, the bishop prays over us and then anoints us with Chrism, saying: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Although infants may be baptized, they are not confirmed in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. To be confirmed, one must reach an age of sufficient maturity to understand and profess the faith personally. When an adult is baptized or when a baptized adult becomes a member of the Catholic Church, the priest can confirm the person at that time.

EUCCHARIST is the ultimate sacrament of Christian Initiation. Information about the Eucharist will be presented in the next part of this Catechism series of articles.



THE SPIRITUAL LIFE 3: Sacrament of the Eucharist

The **EUCCHARIST** is the sacrament of our ongoing nourishment, in union with Christ. The Eucharist celebrates and confirms our baptismal covenant with Christ and our communion (common-union) with Christ and one another as members of the Church community. The Eucharist is a sacrificial banquet in which Christ communicates to us the power of the atoning sacrifice of the cross, and his living presence in our midst under the sacramental forms of bread and wine that have been transformed into his Body and Blood.

The Eucharist is a sacrifice because it celebrates, in the present, the power of Christ's atoning death on the cross. Christ offered his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The Eucharist is also a sacrifice because in it we join Christ in offering ourselves to God the Father as a living sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

The Eucharist is also a sacred banquet because it celebrates Christ's living presence in our midst as a continuation of the Last Supper and Christ's charge to "Do this in memory of me." As at the Last Supper, the bread and wine are transformed into the reality of the Body and Blood of Christ by the blessing called the Consecration. Thus, Christ is really and truly present to us in the sacramental forms of bread and wine. The technical philosophical term for this is Transubstantiation. The Eucharist was first reserved after Mass in order to be brought to the sick, but as gradually the mystery of the real presence was fully realized, it became the object of worship as well.

To worthily prepare for receiving the Eucharist, a person should observe the following important instructions:

- Be a practicing member of the Catholic Church, believing in the mystery of this great sacrament.
- Be at peace with God and God's Church, that is, be free from mortal sin through the sacrament of Penance.
- Fast for at least one hour before Holy Communion by not taking any food or drink except water or any necessary medicine.

The celebration of the Eucharist has had a long and varied development throughout the centuries. In fact, the Mass is the oldest Tradition of the Church, predating even the New Testament. From the simplicity of the Last Supper to the Agape Meal following the Sabbath Services, from the liturgy of word and sacrament of the persecuted Christians to the public Liturgy of the fourth century, from the varied liturgy of the Middle Ages to the uniformity of the Mass of Trent, we have today the Mass of the Second Vatican Council. The new Roman Missal is the latest edition of this sacred tradition of worship in the Church.

Today each of us has an active role to take in the celebration of the Liturgy: as congregation, priest, deacon, reader, communion server, musician, usher, or altar server.

The more active a part we take in the liturgy, the more opportunity we have to be inspired and renewed, for in the Liturgy the Scriptures are read and explained, and the Eucharist is blessed and shared for our divine nourishment and empowerment.



For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church as well.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE 4: Sacraments of Healing

PENANCE is the ordinary means by which serious sins committed after Baptism are forgiven. In the sacrament of Penance, our souls are healed and we are restored to peace with God and with the Church community. There are three integral parts to the healing sacrament of Penance:

- **Contrition:** We should be sincerely sorry for our sins not just out of fear of punishment, but out of love for God. This contrition involves a firm resolution to amend our lives for the better, and to re-dedicate our lives to Christ.
- **Confession:** We pray with a priest concerning our sins so that we may then receive the blessing of forgiveness, the Absolution, entrusted to the apostles and all other priests: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John 20:23).

During the sacrament of Penance, the penitent informs the priest when his/her last confession was, confesses their sins, and then receives a suitable penance, followed by the blessing of sacramental Absolution.

- **Satisfaction:** We do the penance assigned in token gratitude for God's forgiveness and as another step in our ongoing process of personal conversion. Spiritual and material restitution for our wrongs is not only required by justice, but is a further sign of our contrition and our sincerity.

The sacrament of Penance restores us to sanctifying grace and heals the wounds of sin in our lives. Even when not celebrated because of serious sins, Penance offers us strength to avoid further venial sins, and to grow in virtue and holiness of life as followers of Christ.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *American Bishops' Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

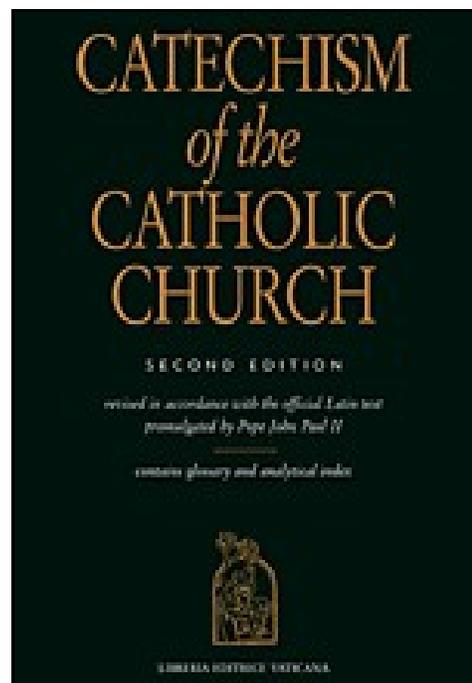
You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.

ANointing THE SICK demonstrates the pastoral concern of the Church community for its sick members, as it recalls the loving concern of Jesus for the sick. Anointing also asks God to restore the sick person to health, if that be God's will. A priest should be called to anoint someone who is seriously ill, injured, or about to undergo surgery. Those of advanced age may also be anointed.

At an Anointing, the priest prays over the sick person and places hands upon the sick person's head. Then the priest anoints the forehead and palms of the sick person, saying these prayers: "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up. Amen."

Before the Anointing, the priest may hear the confession of the sick person. After the Anointing, the sick person may receive Communion. If the person is near death, the final Communion is called Viaticum, food for the journey "along the way" to eternity. Anointing near the time of death is considered to be the seal of the sacrament of Penance, for through this final anointing people can consecrate their final sufferings to God by uniting them to the penitential sufferings of Christ on the cross.

Besides this Anointing, priests and other parish volunteers often visit the sick with the Eucharist as an expression of our parish's loving concern and prayerful support.



THE SPIRITUAL LIFE 5: Sacraments of Community

ORDINATION continues the apostolic ministry and leadership within the Church community. The bishops, as successors of the apostles, ordain new deacons, priests (presbyters or elders), and bishops for service in, with, and to the people of God, as representatives of Christ.

At an ordination, a bishop prayerfully imposes hands upon those to be ordained, and prays for the Holy Spirit to empower them for their ordained ministry.

- Deacons preach, baptize, marry, and lead other liturgical rites. But their main duty as deacons is to care for the poor and the needy.
- Priests celebrate the Eucharist, hear Confessions, and Anoint the Sick, in addition to their diaconal duties. In certain circumstances priests also celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation. But their main concern is pastoral leadership within the local parish community.
- Bishops also celebrate Ordinations and Confirmations, in addition to their priestly duties. But their main concern is leadership within the diocesan community of parishes.

Thus, the apostolic ministry has a threefold task:

- Ministry of the Word: to preach and teach the Catholic Christian Gospel message to all.
- Ministry of the Sacraments: to prayerfully lead the Christian community in liturgical worship.
- Ministry of Leadership: to serve the Christian community in following Christ, and to enable the Christian community to reach out in witness to the whole world.



MARRIAGE in the Lord is a covenant of love and life that is sealed and strengthened by the blessing of God. The sacramental dimension of marriage celebrates the unbreakable bond of love between Christ and the Church. Christian marriage thus has three characteristics:

- Unity: a sacred covenant of life and love between one man and one woman.
- Indissolubility: a sacred covenant of life and love breakable only by death.
- Procreation: a sacred covenant of new life, being open to the gift of children in love.

As such, Christian marriage is a ministry of love wherein husband and wife support one another in their quest for God. It is also a ministry of evangelization wherein father and mother share their faith with their children.

For this reason the family is rightly considered the Church in miniature. At a wedding, the bride and groom celebrate this sacrament by publicly declaring their consent before an authorized priest or deacon, and two witnesses.

The marriage laws of the Church seek to protect the sanctity of marriage and family life. Marriage preparation programs help people to realistically prepare for married life as a way of living out their Christian vocation.

Marriage enrichment programs help people face the challenges of married life, such as Marriage Encounter.

When a marriage ends in a civil divorce, the ministry of church tribunals and annulments determine whether the sacramental marriage vows in question were actually binding unto death in each particular case.

When a marriage ends in the death of one of the spouses, a ministry of bereavement supports people in their grief, and gives them hope to carry on.

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.

Helpful Information 1: Daily Prayers for Catholic Christians

The Sign of the Cross. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Hail Mary. Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Glory Be. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The Act of Contrition. O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

Prayer before Meals. Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer after Meals. We give thee thanks for all thy benefits, O almighty God, who livest and reignest for ever. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Prayer for the Dead. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Jesus Prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The Stations of the Cross. Please consult the special prayer booklets that go along with the fourteen stations of the cross, and meditate on the stations that are erected along the walls of the church.

The Mysteries of the Rosary

- The Joyful Mysteries: 1) The Annunciation, 2) The Visitation, 3) The Nativity, 4) The Presentation in the Temple, 5) The Finding in the Temple
- The Sorrowful Mysteries: 1) The Agony in the Garden, 2) The Scourging at the Pillar, 3) The Carrying of the Cross, 4) The Crucifixion, 5) The Death on the Cross
- The Glorious Mysteries: 1) The Resurrection, 2) The Ascension, 3) The Descent of the Holy Spirit, 4) The Assumption, 5) The Coronation
- The Luminous Mysteries: 1) The Baptism in the Jordan, 2) the Wedding Feast at Cana, 3) the Proclamation of the Kingdom, 4) the Transfiguration, 5) the Institution of the Eucharist

For more information . . .

Please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

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Helpful Information 2: The Liturgy of the Word

*As you participate at Mass regularly,
you will learn these responses by heart.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And with your spirit.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us . . . **Amen.**

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only-Begotten Son, Lord, God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to . . .
Glory to you, O Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Nicene Creed: (used on most Sundays of the year)

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. Amen.

Apostles' Creed: (used during Lent and Easter time)

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful:

Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**



For more information . . . Please go to the website, www.usccb.org/romanmissal for more information about all the new Mass prayers.

Also, please study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the American Bishops' *Catholic Catechism for Adults*, or the new youth catechism, *YouCat*.

You may also want to check out the special website, www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.

Helpful Information 3: The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Offertory Prayers: *(the first two prayers may be silent)*

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life. **Blessed be God forever.***

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink. **Blessed be God forever.***

Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father. **May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good, and the good of all his holy Church.**

Eucharistic Prayer: *Preface*

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right and just.

**Sanctus: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The Mystery of Faith: (three options)

- **We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**
- **When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again.**
- **Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.**

Doxology: Great Amen

Through him, and with him, and in him . . .
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Communion Rite: *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

Deliver us, Lord, we pray . . .

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Sign of Peace:

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles . . . **Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And with your spirit.

Agnus Dei:

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Acclamation before Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

Concluding Rites: (several options)

Final Blessing:

The Lord be with you. **And with your spirit.**
May almighty God bless you . . . **Amen.**

Dismissal: (four options)

- Go forth, the Mass is ended.
Thanks be to God.
- Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.
- Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
Thanks be to God.
- Go in peace.
Thanks be to God.

For more information . . . Please go to the website, www.usccb.org/romanmissal for more information about all the new Mass prayers. You may also want to check out www.CatholicsComeHome.org, which provides helpful resources for all people of good will, including former Catholics, non-Catholics, and current members of the Catholic Church.

How to Pray the Rosary

Beginning the Rosary: Pray the Rosary slowly, quietly and reflectively. The Rosary is a special form of Christian meditation that is recommended for everyone.

Holding the cross, make the “Sign of the Cross,” and recite the “Apostles’ Creed.” Then pray the “Our Father” on the large Rosary bead, followed by the “Hail Mary” on each of the three small beads. Now you are ready to begin praying the mysteries of the Rosary.

The Mysteries of the Rosary: With each of the five large Rosary beads, recite the “Glory Be,” announce the appropriate mystery of the Rosary, recite the “Our Father,” and continue with the decade of the Rosary.

While you slowly pray the “Hail Mary” on the ten beads of each decade, meditate on that particular mystery. Repeat this for five decades. Here are the different sets of mysteries for meditation during the Rosary:

Joyful Mysteries: (*Monday and Saturday*)
Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity,
Presentation, Finding in the Temple.

Sorrowful Mysteries: (*Tuesday and Friday*)
Agony in the Garden, Scourging at the Pillar,
Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross,
Crucifixion.

Glorious Mysteries: (*Wednesday and Sunday*)
Resurrection, Ascension, Descent of the Holy
Spirit, Assumption, Coronation.

Luminous Mysteries: (*Thursday*)
Baptism in the Jordan, Wedding Feast at Cana,
Proclamation of the Kingdom, Transfiguration,
Institution of the Eucharist.

Concluding the Rosary: When you complete the fifth decade of the Rosary, continue with the prayer, “Hail, Holy Queen.” Then recite the concluding prayer, “Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,” and then finish, as you began, with the “Sign of the Cross.” After the Rosary, you are invited to pray the ancient “Jesus Prayer.”

Traditional Rosary Prayers

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Concluding Prayer. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

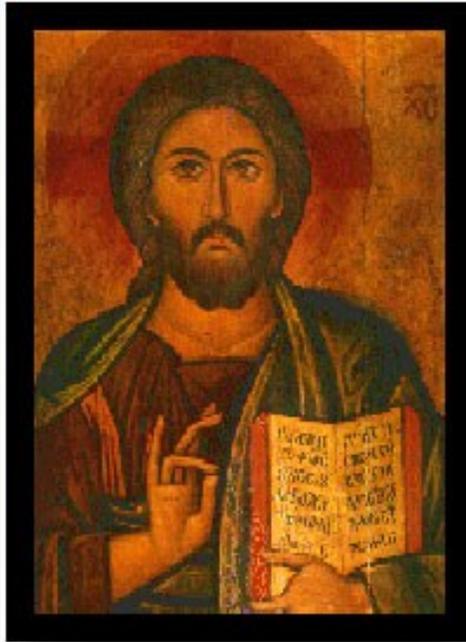
Some Thoughts on Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

The goal of Marian devotion is to lead us to adore Christ as our Savior more fully.

The best way to honor Mary is to join her in loving Jesus Christ as our Lord and God.

All of the privileges that are accorded to Mary, tell us about God’s plan for all believers.

Mary’s best words of advice to us are: “Do whatever [Jesus] tells you!” (Gospel of St. John)



“LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER!”

The Jesus Prayer is one of the oldest of Christian prayers, dating in its original form to the words the two blind men cried out to Jesus in Matthew 20:31. It was formalized by the fifth century, and is part of our heritage of prayer even to this day. It also serves as perhaps the most succinct Gospel message available. Contained in the Jesus Prayer are core elements of our Christian faith: Jesus is declared by name to be the Christ, the anointed one of God, as well as being the Lord of our lives. He is proclaimed to be the Son of God, and therefore divine. He is acknowledged to be in the position of judgment and mercy, and we confess to be sinners who are always in need of his saving and empowering grace. What is more, through this prayer we receive an abundance of grace.

The Jesus Prayer is also a form of the constant prayer that Saint Paul speaks of in his First Letter to the Thessalonians (5:17), where prayer is kept on the lips and in the hearts of believers at all times. By repeating the Jesus Prayer several times each day, for several minutes at a time, this beautiful prayer ultimately sinks into our consciousness. Eventually, we no longer pray the prayer, but the prayer begins to pray us. At this point, the real blessings of the Jesus Prayer start to become evident in our lived experience of faith, along with the increased consolation of the Holy Spirit. An inward stillness gradually springs up within us when we “become this prayer.”

When a state of contemplation is reached through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is literally always on our mind. We begin to see him more clearly in the sacraments, in other people, in the circumstances of daily life, and even in ourselves. Through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is also literally in our hearts. We begin to feel that, as forgiven sinners, we are able to lovingly extend that same mercy to other sinners as well. Finally, through the Jesus Prayer, Jesus is also in our hands. Whatever we do to the least of our brothers and our sisters, we knowingly do unto Christ himself. Thus, we can begin to live more consciously and conscientiously according to the Beatitudes, and continue practicing even more fervently the spiritual and corporal works of mercy as privileges to be embraced, rather than just a duty in our lives. The Jesus Prayer brings all these blessings together as one.

In order to reap all the spiritual benefits of the Jesus Prayer, many people use a prayer rope as an aid to developing this unique prayer form in their spiritual lives. While the use of a prayer rope is not necessary, it is a beneficial tool. If you are interested in obtaining such a prayer rope, you can search for “prayer ropes” or the “Jesus Prayer” on the internet. You can ask your pastor to provide you with a source for prayer ropes, or you can just use your Rosary beads to help you enter into the contemplative state that the Jesus Prayer offers to all who take the time to make the Jesus Prayer the “prayer of the heart” that it is truly meant to be. The rest of the spiritual journey is really between you and Jesus, for he will be your companion and guide all along the way.

CATECHISM QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION - 1

SECTION 1: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES CHRIST MAKE IN HOW I UNDERSTAND WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT?

Old Testament Discussion Questions

Revelation and the Existence of God (The Purpose and Meaning of Life)

What is reality? What is existence? What is truth?

Who is God? What is his plan? What is revelation?

Creation and the Fall (What Went Wrong with Humanity and Why We Need God)

What is creation? Who did it? How did it happen?

Who are we as human beings? What went wrong with creation?

The Old Testament Scriptures (God Reveals His Plan for our Salvation)

How did the Old Testament as we know it come about?

What is salvation history and why does it matter?

New Testament Discussion Questions

The Coming of Christ (God Fulfills His Plan of Salvation for the World)

What is Incarnation? What is salvation?

Who is Jesus and why does he matter?

The Holy Spirit (God's Plan Continues to Unfold in our Spiritual Lives)

Who is the Holy Spirit and why does he matter?

How does the Holy Spirit continue the work of Jesus?

The New Testament Scriptures (Apostolic Teaching Guides Us Still)

How did the New Testament as we know it come about?

Is the New Testament a book or a covenant?

The Final Frontier of Eternity (The Fulfillment of this Life in the Next)

What are the four stages of human existence?

When does eternal life really begin?

Catholic Church Discussion Questions

The Church Community (Christ Founded a New Community of Faith)

What is an Acts 4:2 faith community and why does it matter?

What does one, holy, catholic, and apostolic mean?

Tradition and History (Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium together)

What came first: Scripture or Tradition?

What is the role of the Magisterium and the Catechism?

The Church in Heaven (Awaiting the Resurrection at the End of Time)

What is the Church militant, repentant, and triumphant?

How many are there who are saved, and how can we be sure?

Organizational Notes (Practical Information about Parish Membership)

What is the local parish community and how does it function?

What is beyond and above the local parish and how does it matter?

(continued on next page)

CATECHISM QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION - 2

SECTION 2: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES CHRIST MAKE IN HOW I LIVE OUT MY DAILY LIFE?

Moral Life Discussion Questions

Following Christ (The Moral Life for a Full Life)

What is the difference between natural law, revealed law, and gospel law?

What is the new commandment of Jesus and how does this impact our daily lives?

God and the Family (Commandments 1-4)

What are our duties toward God and his Church?

What are our duties toward family and society?

Persons and Things (Commandments 5-8)

How should we interact with others as disciples of Christ?

How should we promote the common good for all people?

A Change of Heart (Commandments 9-10 and the Virtues)

What does it mean to have a change of heart from within?

What is the role of virtue in our salvation?

Being a Catholic Christian (Precepts of the Church)

What does it mean to be a practicing Catholic Christian?

How can we serve as missionary disciples of Christ?

Spiritual Life Discussion Questions

Sacramental Prayer (Liturgy, Meditation, and Contemplation)

What is a sacrament? How does sacramentality relate to our humanity?

What is the role of religion in connecting our spiritual life to our life in this world?

Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism and Confirmation)

What does it mean to become a Christian?

What does it mean to be part of a Christian community?

Sacrament of the Eucharist (The Source and Summit of Prayer)

What is a sacrifice and how is it related to what is a covenant?

Why is the Eucharist the source and summit of our spiritual life?

Sacraments of Healing (Penance and Anointing the Sick)

Does God give us second chances and more?

Does God care about our pain and suffering?

Sacraments of Community (Matrimony and Ordination)

Why is traditional marriage part of God's creation?

What is the role of ordained church leadership?

