

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

24-Week Journey Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church | Contents

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Welcome

Welcome to our study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*! The fact that you're taking this course speaks volumes as to the great work God is doing in you, drawing you more deeply into the riches of our faith.

In the introductory session, we are going to get our "sea legs" For many of us, studying the Catechism may be a daunting or mysterious task. In this session, we will strive to acclimate you to this resource, so that you will be able to gain maximum benefit from this course.

As we begin, you may have some questions. We will answer several of the more common ones below. If you have additional questions, please feel free to ask your School of Faith instructor or to submit your questions at www.SchoolofFaith.com.

What is a catechism?

A *catechism* is any summary or exposition of the Catholic doctrine in areas of faith and morals designed for teaching others. A catechism is a tool for *catechesis*, which is the formation of Christian disciples in the faith of the Church through systematic teaching that affects both head and heart. Those who perform the ministry of catechesis are called *catechists*.

What is the Catechism of the Catholic Church?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a *universal* catechism, in that it was promulgated for Catholics everywhere, and it is the benchmark for more specialized catechisms (e.g., children's catechisms).

We will frequently cite the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in this study guide as the "CCC" or simply as "the Catechism," in keeping with popular usage.

In 1986, Blessed Pope John Paul II formed a commission to oversee the development of the Catechism. The initial publication took place in 1992, and the definitive edition ("*edition typica*") was published in 1997.

In approving the publication of the Catechism, Blessed Pope John Paul II aptly summarized the essence of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

"The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*...is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion. May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!" (apostolic constitution *Fidei Depositum*, found at the beginning of most editions of the CCC).

What is the significance of the Catechism?

As a comprehensive, universal catechism, the CCC is a landmark document that plays a pivotal role in the life of the Church.

The last universal catechism of the Church was the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, better known as the "Roman Catechism," which was promulgated in 1566, nearly 450 years ago!

More recently, in the United States we had a popular national catechism known as the "Baltimore Catechism," which came out back in the 1880s.

While these and other catechisms faithfully convey the traditional teaching of the church, the Holy Father determined that contemporary men and women would benefit greatly from a new, universal catechism.

In addition to containing more accessible language, the new CCC has the distinct advantage of being able to incorporate conciliar and papal teaching that didn't exist at the time of the earlier catechisms. Just as the old Roman Catechism embodied the teaching of the Council of Trent (1545-63), the CCC embodies the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (or "Vatican II," 1962-65).

While Vatican II didn't change the fundamentals of the faith, it did offer fresh insights and directives ordered to what has become known as a "new evangelization." Now with the CCC, we have ready access to a reliable synthesis of the letter and spirit of Vatican II.

Lastly, on the significance of the CCC, the United States bishops have formed a committee that assesses all catechetical materials used in this country, to ensure that they are in conformity with the CCC. This development has led to some welcome improvements in catechetical materials since the publication of the Catechism.

What is the purpose of the Catechism?

As is the case with any catechism, the purpose is to present an organic synthesis of the essential, fundamental elements of Catholic doctrine in the area of faith and morals.

When we talk about "faith and morals," we are talking about the "deposit of faith," the body of Church teaching that all Catholics are called to believe and live, as opposed to opinions or theories that are more personal to the individual.

The CCC, then, presents the fullness of what we are to believe and live as Catholics, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and 2,000 years of Church Tradition, drawing from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and magisterial teachings and pronouncements.

What is the structure of the Catechism?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* follows the traditional catechetical approach that builds on four pillars, which are traceable to the activities of the first Christian believers: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The four pillars are:

- (1) **The Church believes: Creed** (CCC 26-1065)
- (2) **The Church celebrates: Liturgy and Sacraments** (CCC 1066-1690)
- (3) **The church lives: Christian Morality** (CCC 1691-2557)
- (4) **The Church yearns for God: Prayer** (CCC 2558-2865)

You may wish to page through the CCC and check out these major sections or “pillars.” In our 24-week overview of the CCC, we will follow this progression, spending on average six sessions per pillar.

What are those emboldened numbers at the beginning of every paragraph?

The emboldened numbers at the beginning of the paragraph help us to quickly find a particular teaching. For example, if you’re asked to go to “paragraph 1346” or to “CCC 1346,” you will be able to quickly get there and find the teaching (“The liturgy of the Eucharist unfolds...”).

Since we will use these numbers as our landmarks, the page number is irrelevant. Therefore, it doesn’t matter if your edition is different from that of the instructor or those in your discussion group.

What is the “In Brief” section?

At the end of each unit of teaching, there is an “In Brief” section. The “In Brief” section contains approximately five to ten numbered paragraphs. The section summarizes the essential points of the preceding lesson. This is a good section to read carefully. If we don’t understand one or more of the points, we can then go back to the more detailed explanation in the lesson.

Let’s take an example. The section on “The Battle of Prayer” begins at CCC 2725 and ends at CCC 2751. These 27 paragraphs are then summed up in the “In Brief” section, which is CCC 2752-58.

What are those italicized numbers in the margins?

They are hand cross-references to other paragraphs that deal with the same subject. Let’s look at an example.

In CCC 1214, the Catechism tells us how the Sacrament of Baptism got its name. In the margin is a reference to CCC 628, where Baptism comes up in the context of Jesus’ death and burial.

How do I look things up in the Catechism?

There are many ways to use this reference tool. Most editions have a topical index, which directs us to paragraphs on the topic we’re researching. Many editions also have a glossary, which not only gives a concise definition of the term, but also points us to the relevant paragraph(s) in the body of the Catechism.

Speaking of the body of the Catechism, there are thousands of foot notes. Looking up these sources can be a most enriching endeavor. Most of the references are to Scripture, and the rest are to Church documents that are usually available on the Internet.

The Catechism is also very helpful when it comes to Scripture study, as most versions contain an index of citations, both to Scripture as well as to other sources. Let’s say we’re studying John 19: 26-27, the passage where Our Lord at the Cross entrusts the beloved disciple to His mother. In the index we find three references to John 19: 26-27 (501, 964, 2605), and two more references to John 19:27 (2677, 2679).

Are there other tools that I should use in conjunction with my Catechism?

Absolutely! Here is a short list of resources you may wish to consider using.

- (1) The Catechism is meant to be used in conjunction with *Scripture*. If you do not already have access to a Bible, it would be worth the time and expense to acquire one.

And assuming you do have a Bible, you might want to consider a study Bible that will help you understand Scripture more profoundly and fruitfully. One series that we especially recommend is the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*, which is published by Ignatius Press.

- (2) The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* is just that, a “compendium” or “summary” of the CCC, in an engaging question-and-answer format. It’s the “Cliff Notes” version of the CCC. The Compendium costs approximately \$15, but it is available at no charge at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.ht
- (3) The “*Documents of Vatican II*” are the sixteen documents issued by the Church during Vatican II in the 1960s. All sixteen documents are cited extensively in the Catechism. If you’d like to read one or more of the documents in their entirety, the most widely used edition is the one edited by Austin Flannery, O.P.

For individual documents, though, the easiest and least expensive way to view them is to Google the Latin name of the particular document. The first search result is usually the official Vatican translation.

- (4) *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* was published in recent years by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with full Vatican approval. The Catechism actually anticipates and calls for such “particular catechisms” (CCC 24), which adapt the Catechism for particular cultures and audiences. The U.S. Catechism follows the same general outline of the Catechism, while also bringing into play the contributions of prominent American Catholics. This catechism costs approximately \$25.

There are many other resources that can be recommended, including the *General Directory for Catechesis* (or “GDC”), Pope Paul VI’s *Credo of the People of God*, and various other studies and commentaries. Your instructor will be able to give you additional guidance as to what would be most helpful in your circumstances.

Any supplemental resource you may want to purchase surely would be available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other large outlets. Ordering through them is fine, but we want to put a plug in here for Catholic bookstores in your area. Your business would benefit them in their efforts to make Catholic resources available to the public.

Discussion Questions

(1) What was my experience of the “Catechism class,” in whatever form it may have taken, in my youth?

(2) How familiar am I with the Catechism of the Catholic Church? What do I hope to gain from this course?

(3) Which of the “four pillars” of the Catechism am I most interested in studying? Why?

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

2

Session 2 | CCC 1 – 184 | Revelation, Tradition, Scripture, Faith

Review

Welcome to the second session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*! Now that we've had our introductory session on the Catechism, let's crack it open and unpack the priceless treasures it contains!

We will briefly cover the Prologue (CCC 1-25). It sets the tone for the entire Catechism by reminding us of the purpose of our lives: to seek God, to come to know Him, to love Him with all our hearts, and to build bonds of love and unity with others—all as we push forward to the fullness of eternal life!

Okay, so that's the big picture. But how do we get there? That's why we need *catechesis*, which is nothing other than the planting, nurturing, and bringing to fruition of the seed of faith. When we open ourselves to this process, we are said to be *disciples* of Christ. The Catechism is a manual for Christian disciples.

From there we will begin (at CCC 26) the lengthy section entitled "The Profession of Faith." This section presents what we believe as Catholics, especially as summarized in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. In the next session we will begin to look at the specific doctrinal elements of our faith—in other words, the "what."

Before that, however, the Catechism gives us the "why" and "how" (CCC 27-134) of our faith, and that's what we're focusing on today. We will explore our innate desire for God and the various ways we come to know Him through creation (CCC 31-49). We're hard-wired for God and, on top of that, we have the capacity of entering into relationship with Him.

Here's where it all gets startling. God is not a cosmic watchmaker, indifferent to puny little human beings and our problems. Nor is He so holy and so remote that we can't find Him. Rather, throughout human history, God has come looking for us!

He revealed Himself to the human race gradually, as He formed a chosen people and entered into covenants with them (CCC 50-64). This act of revealing Himself ("revelation") reached its climax when God became one like us in the person of Christ, who is truly the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14). The fullness of all God wants us to know and do is summed up in Christ (CCC 65-67).

But Christ walked the earth 2,000 years ago. How are the saving words and deeds of Christ made effective in our lives today? Through Scripture and Tradition, the Word of God is to be brought to all people through the ministry of the Church (CCC 74-83). And Christ did not leave us scratching our heads trying to figure things out for ourselves. Rather, through His apostles and their successors (bishops), He has given us the Magisterium, or "teaching office," of the Church to proclaim the Gospel and safeguard it from error (CCC 84-87).

The Catechism itself is a shining example of the marvelous interplay among Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium as we strive to seek, know, and love.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1 – 184. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Why did God create me? What is the purpose of my life? (1)

(2) Why do I have a desire for God? (27)

(3) How do I know that God exists? What are the two ways of approaching God from creation? (31-34)

(4) What are the limitations of human reason when it comes to knowing God and His will for us? (36-38)

(5) What is the fullness of God's revelation? (73)

(6) What is Tradition? What is the relationship between Scripture and Tradition? (80-82)

(7) What is the deposit of faith? (84)

Christ revealed to us the means of our salvation. This reservoir of Christian revelation is called the *deposit of faith*. Christ entrusted the mission of bringing this revelation to the whole world in every age to His Church, through the ministry of the Apostles and their successors. That's why the passing on of Christian revelation in its entirety is called "Apostolic Tradition" (CCC 75-79). The channels through which this single reservoir irrigates all humanity are Scripture and Tradition, under the Spirit-led guidance and leadership of the successors of the apostles.

(8) What do I think of when I hear the word "Magisterium"? What is its relationship to the Word of God? (85-87)

(9) How do I know that what Scripture says is true? (105-08)

(10) What is "faith" for a Christian? What does faith mean to me? What do I hope to gain from my study of the Catechism? (150-52)

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

3

Session 3 | CCC 185 – 354 | Trinity, Creation and the Problem of Evil

Review

Welcome to the third session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Last week we asked big questions, such as “What is the purpose of my life?”, “What does God expect of me?”, and “How am I able to know God?”. We saw how God has come to answer these questions for us. He has gradually revealed Himself to us, culminating in the coming of Christ, who shows us the way to eternal happiness and helps us get there!

Christ’s saving message is brought to each generation through the Church He founded, which calls forth from us the “obedience of faith” (CCC 143-44).

Now we turn to the *content* of our faith, which is summarized in the Creed (CCC 186-87). What does God want us to know about Himself, about the world, and about ourselves?

The most basic element of the Christian faith is belief in one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, also known as the *Holy Trinity* (CCC 234).

God has many significant attributes. He is the Supreme Good. He is truth (CCC 215-17). He is love (CCC 218-21). He is all-powerful and all-knowing (CCC 268). And in the Trinity, we see that He is a communion of persons—in other words, a family.

Out of His superabundant goodness and infinite love, God created the entire world out of nothing (CCC 296-98). God is glorified through His creation (CCC 319).

Man is the summit of God’s creation (CCC 343). As we will further unpack next week, God entrusted us with the responsibility of caring for the created world. Through man, all creation is destined for the glory of God (CCC 353).

Throughout this course, we will discover that God created us with a specific purpose in mind. He endowed us with free will not to do “whatever,” or simply what “feels good,” but to willingly embrace His blueprint for our well-being and eternal happiness of all people.

In this overview of the Holy Trinity and God’s creative work in the world, we will be tempted to view God in human terms. However, we were created in God’s image, not the other way around! As we deepen our understanding of the Father’s loving plan for us, we will glimpse in exciting, new ways what it means to be part of a family—both a human family, and even more, God’s family (see Ephesians 3:14-15).

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 185 – 354. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are creeds? Why are they important? (185-87)

THE APOSTLES CREED	THE NICENE CREED
I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth	I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,	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,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,	and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell;	For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,
on the third day he rose again from the dead;	and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.
he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.	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.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.	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.

(2) How do the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed begin? What is significant about the opening line of these creeds? (199-200)

(3) What is the central mystery of Christian faith and life? (234)

(4) How does the Church express her faith in the Trinity? What difference does this teaching make in my life? (253-55)

(5) What is the only attribute of God mentioned in the creeds? What does it mean? (268)

(6) Why did God create the world? (293-94)

Three Essential Truths from the Beginning of Genesis

The Book of Genesis is not about *how* God created, but *what* He created and *why*. Here are three essential biblical truths about the creation of the world:

(1) God is the first cause of everything.

(2) Though it's possible that the human body may have evolved from lower organisms, the human soul did not. The soul is spiritual and immortal. It was created and infused by God when He created the first human beings.

(3) All humanity comes from a first set of parents. In the next session, we will see how their sin affected all succeeding generations.

(7) Why does God allow bad things to happen? (324)

(8) Who are the angels? (328-30) Can I recall the names of any of the angels mentioned in Scripture? (If you need help, check out 335)

(9) How are we different from angels? Why does it matter? (350-51; also jump ahead and read 364-65)

(10) How do I understand mankind's place in the world? What can I do this week to praise and thank God for the wonders of His creation?

"The glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God."

–St. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 125-202 A.D.)

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

4

Session 4 | CCC 355 – 421 | Man, Original Sin and Its Consequences

Review

Welcome to the fourth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In our last session, we examined the Catechism’s teaching on the Holy Trinity, the most fundamental Christian belief. We also studied the creation of the world, and saw that man is the summit of God’s creation.

We will begin this session by taking a closer look at the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God (356-61), endowed with both a body and soul (362-68).

We will also discuss the complementarity of the sexes, as men and women were literally “made for each other” (369-73). Even more, our first parents were in harmony with the Creator.

God considered everything He made, culminating in the creation of the human race, as “very good” (Genesis 1:31). All was seemingly right with the world.

Tragically, however, mankind suffered a terrible setback at the outset of human history. Adam and Eve failed to trust and obey God (CCC 397). In other words, they rejected God’s fatherhood and His lordship over their lives.

In this session, then, we will take a closer look at the Catechism’s treatment of original sin, which is an essential truth of the Catholic faith (CCC 388-89). We will consider the biblical account of the fall, and the role played by Satan (CCC 390-95).

We will also see how this teaching affects us today, as the sin of Adam and Eve affected not only themselves, but also human nature (CCC 399-405). In other words, we all bear the effects of original sin. How? In what ways?

Adam and Eve’s sin and their subsequent banishment from the Garden of Eden was truly a dark moment. Yet, even then we hear the first promise of a Redeemer (CCC 410). God would not simply abandon us to the power of death.

Many years later, in the “fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4), God would send His Son to conquer the power of sin in the world—and in us.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 355 – 421. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God? (356-357)

(2) How does the Church understand the reality of sin? (386-87)

(3) What is the "reverse side" of the Good News of Jesus Christ? (389)

(4) How am I to read the account of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3? Why is it relevant to my life today? (390)

(5) What does the Church teach concerning the devil? (391-95)

(6) What was at the heart of Mankind's first sin (397-98)

(7) What were the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's sin? (399-401) What were the consequences for the human family?

(8) In what ways has human nature been wounded by original sin? How does my own personal experience verify this truth? (405)

(9) What is the *Protoevangelium*? How was the *Protoevangelium* fulfilled? (4:10-11)

(10) The Catechism (409) refers to mankind's spiritual battle with the forces of evil. How aware am I of this "spiritual battle" within myself and the world? What can I do this week to combat sin in my life?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

5

Session 5 | CCC 422 – 511 | Understanding the Persons of Jesus and Mary

Review

Welcome to the fifth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Last week we studied the fall of Adam and Eve, and we saw how their original sin had devastating consequences for the entire human family. Yet, even then, God did not abandon us, but rather foretold how the offspring of “the woman” would definitively conquer sin and death.

Beginning in this session, we will examine those articles of the Creed that pertain to Jesus, Son of God and Son of “the woman,” Mary. As the “New Adam” Jesus undoes the sin of the original Adam “so that we should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

We will begin by examining some of God the Son’s names and titles, which tell us so much about who He is. In particular, we will consider “Jesus” (430-35), “Christ” (436-40), and Lord (446-51).

We will discuss the mystery of God’s taking on a human nature, as “He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary” (456-511). We will examine in some detail Our Lord’s motives in becoming man (456-60) and how the Church through the centuries has grappled with the mystery of the Incarnation (461-83).

We will conclude the session with an overview of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s role in the mystery of Christ (484-511). As the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, she is truly the *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. And by divine grace, she is our mother, too!

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 422 – 511. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session’s reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What is the “good news” that I am invited to share with others? (422-24, 439)

(2) What is the significance of the name of Jesus? (430, 432)

(3) What is the meaning of the word "Christ"? Why is Jesus called the Christ? (436-40)

(4) What does it mean to call Jesus "Lord"? (446-455) How is Jesus the Lord of my life?

(5) Why did the Son of God become man? (456-60)

"For the Son of God became man so that we might become God."

-St. Athanasius

(6) What does the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) teach us about the person and natures of Christ? (467, 480-81)

(7) What is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception? (491) How has this teaching been understood in the East? (493)

A Common "Mis-conception"

The Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Mary in her mother Anne's womb. It does not refer to the miraculous conception of Jesus in His mother Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit.

On December 8th, the Church celebrates Mary's Immaculate Conception. Nine months later, on September 8th, the Church celebrates the birth of Mary.

Similarly, on March 25th, the Church celebrates the Annunciation, in which the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and announced that she would conceive a Son by the Holy Spirit. Nine months later, the Church celebrates Christmas, the birth of Jesus.

December 8 Immaculate Conception Mary Conceived	9 months later...	September 8 Birth of Mary
March 25 The Annunciation Jesus Conceived	9 months later...	December 25 Birth of Jesus

(8) Why is the Blessed Virgin Mary considered the “New Eve”? (494, 511) Why should this matter to me?

(9) What does the Church teach concerning Mary’s virginity? (499, 510)

(10) How well do I know the Church’s teachings concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary? Am I sometimes confused or even embarrassed when other Christians challenge me about Our Lady’s role in the Church? How can I grow in my love for our Blessed Mother?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the sixth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In our last session, we examined the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and His various names and titles. We also considered the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her role in the mystery of Christ.

This week, we will survey the entirety of Christ's life, including His infancy (527-30) and hidden life in Nazareth (531-34).

We will then spend ample time reviewing His public ministry (535-70), including the events now known as the "luminous" mysteries of the Rosary, such as the Baptism of the Lord (535-37) and the Proclamation of the Kingdom (543-46). Our treatment will also include the role of miracles in Jesus' ministry (547-50) and the significance of His giving the "keys" to St. Peter (551-53).

Our session will take us up to Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (569-70). Next week we will unpack the dramatic events of Holy Week, culminating in Christ' suffering and death, as well as His glorious Ascension into heaven.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 512 – 570. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) How is Christ's life a mystery? (514-15)

The Luminous Mysteries	
In 2002, Blessed Pope John Paul II introduced the Mysteries of Light, also known as the Luminous Mysteries, to complement the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. We will discuss the Rosary in an upcoming session, but for now let's take a look at the Luminous Mysteries, which are five significant events that take place during Jesus' public ministry.	
Mystery	Scripture
1. The Baptism of Jesus	And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" – Matthew 3: 16-17
2. The Wedding Feast of Cana	When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "do whatever he tells you" – John 2: 3-5
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom	Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." – Mark 1: 14, 15
4. The Transfiguration	And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white...And a voice came out of the cloud, saying "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" – Luke 9: 29, 35
5. The Institution of the Eucharist	Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." – Matthew 26: 26

(2) What was Jesus' "hidden life"? What does it teach us? (533-34)

(3) What is the significance of the Baptism of Jesus? (535-37)

(4) What do we learn from the temptations of Jesus in the desert? (538-40)

(5) According to CCC 546, what method did Jesus frequently use to describe the Kingdom of God? Give some examples of this methodology.

(6) Why did Jesus work miracles during His public ministry? (547-50) Am I open to the possibility of miracles? Have I experienced any miracles or other "signs" in my life that have drawn me to Christ?

(7) What specific authority did Our Lord give to St. Peter? (553) Why is that important to Christians today?

(8) What happened at the Transfiguration? (554) What is the meaning of this event for us? (555-56)

"You were transfigured on the mountain and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendor of the Father."

--Byzantine Liturgy

(9) As Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem, the crowd shouted "Hosanna." What does "Hosanna" mean? (559) When do we say "Hosanna" during the Mass? What is happening in this scene from Jesus' life? (570)

(10) What mystery from the life of Christ that we studied in this session is most meaningful to me at this time in my life? Why? Can I set aside some time this week to prayerfully reflect upon the mysteries of Christ's life?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the seventh session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Last week we surveyed the life of Christ, from His early years up through the completion of His public ministry. We left off with His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as Holy Week began to unfold.

We will begin this session by examining Jesus' controversial relationships to Israel (574-76), the Law (577-82), and the Temple (583-86), which provide the context for much of what occurred during Holy Week.

We will then discuss the trial of Jesus (595-98) before focusing at some length on Jesus' death on the Cross as the means of redemption for the whole world (598-623). Christ truly tasted death; He was buried (624-30) and descended into hell (631-37).

From there we will turn to the crowning truth of the Christian faith: Christ's Resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday (638-58). We will look at the Resurrection as both a historical event as well as a mystery of faith that transcends our limited understanding.

We will conclude this session with the Catechism's treatment of Our Lord's glorious Ascension into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father (659-67), from whence He will come again to judge the living and the dead (668-82).

We will only be able to scratch the surface of the profound mysteries of Christ's suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension—collectively known as the “Paschal mystery”—through which He redeemed the world. Yet may this overview of the Catechism's treatment of these mysteries lead us to a renewed appreciation of the price Christ paid for our sins, and the glory that awaits those who trust in Him.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 571 – 682. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Jesus was condemned for His perceived (a) failure to submit to the Mosaic Law; (b) hostility to the Temple; and (c) denial of faith in one God. Were these accusations justified? (592-94) Why or why not?

(2) Are all Jews responsible for putting Jesus to death? (597) Why or why not? What is my own responsibility for Jesus' death? (598)

(3) How does the Church understand the connection between the Last Supper and Christ's sacrifice on the Cross? (610-11)

The Last Supper Inaugurates the New Passover

The Passover meal recalled and made present God's liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Eucharist, which Christ inaugurated at the Last Supper, recalls and makes present God's liberation of His children from slavery to sin, so that we may enjoy the fullness of life.

The Passover was kept as "a memorial" (Exodus 12:14). In the biblical understanding of memorial, the past is not merely remembered, but also relived. One ancient Jewish commentator explained, "In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt." This memorial thus united all generations of the family of Israel around this foundational event.

Something remarkably similar and indeed greater is going on in the Eucharist, the sacrament of our unity in Christ, as summarized in paragraph 1364 of the Catechism:

"When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present. As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out."

(4) What is the so-called "Agony in the Garden"? What is its significance in the saving work of Christ? (612)

(5) How are we called to participate in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross? (618) What does this mean in practical terms?

(6) What is the place of the Resurrection in the Christian faith? (638) How is the Resurrection both a historical and transcendent event? (647)

(7) What are the two aspects of the Paschal mystery? How do they relate to the grace of justification received at Baptism? (654)

One of the earliest Christian hymns celebrating the paschal mystery is found in Philippians 2:6-11. This beautiful passage is worth memorizing:

"Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

(8) When did Our Lord ascend into heaven? (659) What is the significance of this event for us? (666-67)

(9) Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God. How does He reign now? (668-74) How is He the King of my own heart?

(10) What resolution can I make for this coming week to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the eighth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Over the past few weeks, we have surveyed the Catechism's rich teaching on Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who in the fullness of time took on human flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We examined not only the person and titles of Christ, but also events in His life, from His conception to His glorious Ascension into heaven.

In this lesson, we will study the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity (687 and following). The Holy Spirit is the "Lord and giver of life."

Christ promised that He would send the Holy Spirit when He went to be with His Father (727-30). This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost (731-32), which is sometimes called the birthday of the Church. From that day, the Holy Spirit has been the life principle, or "soul," of the Church, communicating salvation in Christ to all peoples of all time (737-41).

Much of this lesson, then, will be devoted to the mystery of the Church. We will touch upon its origins (759 and following), its distinguishing "marks" (811-65), and its composition (871-933).

We will also look at many images of the Church, which help us to go deeper into the mystery. Some such images include "People of God," "Bride of Christ," "Temple of the Holy Spirit," and the "Mystical Body of Christ," among others.

As we begin, let's call to mind the intimate relationship between Christ and His Church, calling to mind the maxim coined in the early centuries by St. Cyprian: "You cannot have God for your Father if you do not have the Church for your mother."

And let us thank God for this magnificent gift!

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 683 – 945. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are some of the common symbols of the Holy Spirit? (694-701) Which ones are most meaningful to me? Why?

(2) How is God's Spirit at work in creation? (703-04) In the Blessed Virgin Mary? (721-22, 744) At Pentecost? (731-32)

(3) What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church? How do I understand the working of the Holy Spirit in my life? (737-41, 747)

(4) What is the mission of the Church? (767-69)

(5) Is the Church visible or spiritual? (770-71) In what sense is the Church a mystery? (779)

(6) Why is the Church called the People of God? (781-82)

(7) In what ways does the Church participate in Christ's threefold office of priest, prophet, and king? (783-86) What can /do to participate more fully in the life of the Church? (see also 941-43)

(8) What are the four marks of the Church? (811) In your own words, describe each in a sentence or two. (813, 823-24, 830-31, 857)

(9) How does the Catechism describe the mission of the Pope and bishops? (880-82, 938-39)

(10) Read CCC 898-90, on the vocation of lay people. How would I describe my own Christian vocation? What can I do this week to seek and make known the kingdom of God in my own corner of the world?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the ninth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Last week, we surveyed the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit and the Church. In this session, we will conclude our treatment of the Creed, which is the first of the four pillars of the Catechism. This session has five sections:

- I. Communion of Saints
- II. Mary as Spiritual Mother and Devotion to Mary
- III. Forgiveness of Sins
- IV. Resurrection of the Body
- V. Life Everlasting

The communion of saints (946-62) speaks to the wealth of spiritual goods we share as members of the Church, as well as our relationship with Christ and, through Him, with all Christians.

Mary had a special role not only in the mystery of Christ, but continues to play a key role in the mystery of the Church, as our mother and intercessor (963-75). We will discover in a deeper way why Marian devotion is an essential part of the Christian life (971).

Another truth that flows from the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church is the forgiveness of sins (976-87). Christ's victory over sin is accessible to us! In the next pillar of the Catechism, we will study how this forgiveness is offered to us through the sacraments of the Church.

Lastly, this session will briefly cover the resurrection of the body (988-1019) and life everlasting (1020-65). We will look at the last things (death, judgment, heaven, and hell), which all of us will eventually encounter in life. This portion of the Creed is often misunderstood, so we will take great care to present the Church's teaching clearly and accurately.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 946 – 1065. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Who belongs to the “communion of saints”? (962) What is the significance of this teaching to me?

(2) How is Mary the “Mother of the Church”? (963-64)

(3) What kind of devotion is directed to the Blessed Virgin Mary? (971) How does devotion to Mary bring me closer to Jesus?

Latria	Praise and worship belonging to God alone; directed to Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Hyperdulia	Veneration and intercessory prayer directed to the Blessed Virgin Mary; it's special (“hyper”) because of Mary's role as the Mother of Christ and our mother, yet it's still “dulia” and not latria, because Mary is nonetheless a creature redeemed by Christ
Dulia	Veneration and intercessory prayers directed to saints

(4) We profess in the Creed our belief in the “forgiveness of sins.” What does this article of the Creed mean to me? What sacraments are the ordinary means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins (984-86)?

*Were there no forgiveness of sins in the Church, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation. Let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift.
–St. Augustine*

(5) What happens to our body and soul when we die? (1016)

(6) What exactly is the resurrection of the body? (997) When will this take place? (1001)

(7) The Catechism refers to heaven as “the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longing, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (1024). How would I describe heaven in my own words? How is heaven described in Scripture? (1027)

*“True and subsistent life consists in this: the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, pouring out his heavenly gifts on all things without exception. Thanks to his mercy, we too, men that we are, have received the inalienable promise of eternal life.”
–Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86)*

(8) What is purgatory? (1030-32)

(9) What does "Amen" mean? Why does the Creed end with the word "Amen"? (1061-65)

(10) We have now covered the entire section of the Catechism on the Creed. What aspect of the Creed causes me the most difficulty? What can I do this week to grow in my faith?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the tenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

We have now completed our treatment of the first part of the Catechism, namely the Profession of Faith, or Creed. Now we are embarking upon the second part, entitled “The Celebration of the Christian Mystery.”

While the Creed is a summary of what we believe as Christians and more specifically as Catholics, our faith in Jesus Christ can't remain “out there” as merely a set of abstract doctrines. Rather, we need to enter into the mystery ourselves. Christ came to redeem the world; but how do *we* enter the story and participate in Christ's victory over sin and death? We do so through the sacraments.

In this lesson we will survey the nature and purpose of the Church's liturgy, and its intimate relationship to Christ's Paschal mystery (1066-75). We will see that the sacred liturgy is truly the work of the Holy Trinity (1076-1112).

In subsequent sessions we will look at each of the sacraments in more detail. Here we will define the term “sacrament” and see how the sacraments relate to Christ (1114-16), the Church (1117-21), faith (1122-26), salvation (1127-29), and eternal life (1130). We will particularly stress the “memorial” dimension of the sacraments: Sacraments not only call to mind Christ's saving work, but also make it present and effective in our midst.

Then we will look at liturgical celebrations in general. We will see that our celebration of the Church's liturgy is a participation in the eternal, heavenly liturgy (1136-44). We will look at the deep symbolism of the liturgy, which not only includes the sacramental signs themselves (1145-55), but also the role of the liturgy of the Word (1153-55), sacred music (1156-58), holy images (1159-62), and even the church building itself (1179-86).

Lastly, we will survey the Church's liturgical year (1163-73), with a particular emphasis on the Lord's Day and our celebration of Sunday Mass.

With this overview in place, we will then be ready to dive into the Catechism's treatment of the individual sacraments in subsequent sessions, beginning next week with the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1066 – 1209. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What is the Paschal mystery? How is the Paschal mystery related to the sacraments of the Church? (1067)

(2) How does the Catechism define the liturgy? (1069) How would I describe the liturgy in my own words?

(3) What necessarily precedes the liturgy? What fruits are to be expected from the liturgy? (1072)

(4) What is the work of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity in the liturgy? (1110-12)

(5) What is a sacrament? How are sacraments *efficacious* signs? (1127-28, 1131)

"What was visible in our Savior has passed over into the mysteries."

--St. Leo the Great

(6) Who celebrates the heavenly liturgy? (1137) Who celebrates the liturgy on earth? (1140-42) Can I recall a celebration of the liturgy in which I felt especially close to God and the angels and saints?

(7) What is the significance of sacramental signs and symbols? (1189)

Catholic theology has traditionally used the terms "matter" and "form" in describing how the sacraments work. "Matter" is the physical element or "sign" used in the sacrament, while the "form" is the words said by the minister of the sacrament. So, for example, in Baptism the matter would be the pouring of or immersion in water, while the form would be the minister's words, "_____, I baptize you in the name of the Father . . ."

(8) What is the center of the liturgical season? (1166-67) What can I do to make the celebration of the Lord's Day more fully the "center" of my week?

(9) What is the significance of church buildings? (1180-81) What are some of its principal furnishings? (1182-84)

From the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787 A.D.): "Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells in her) we rightly define with full certainty and correctness that, like the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy images of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God, and the venerated angels, all the saints and the just, whether painted or made of mosaic or other suitable material, are to be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, walls and panels, in houses and on streets."

(10) The Church calls the laity to a full, conscious, and active participation in the sacred liturgy. What practical things can I do this week (and beyond!) to more fully, consciously, and actively participate in the liturgy, especially Sunday Mass?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the eleventh session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In the last session, we discussed the nature of liturgy and the sacraments in general. We saw that the sacraments are signs that bring about—through the power of the Holy Spirit—what they signify. They are channels of divine grace.

Over the next few lessons, we will survey the Catechism’s treatment of the individual sacraments, beginning with the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. This is most fitting, as Baptism and Confirmation are sacraments of initiation and thus the means by which we enter into the life of the Church (1210-12).

In particular, Baptism is the basis of the Christian life (1213). The spiritual “washing” of Baptism (1214-16) is foreshadowed in the Old Testament (1217-22). The Old Testament images find their fulfillment in Christ (1223-25), who instituted Baptism as a sacrament of the Church (1226-28).

We will examine the rite of Baptism itself with its rich symbolism, both as a rite for infants as well as for adult converts through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), which culminates at the Easter Vigil (1229-61).

Lastly, we will survey the effects of Baptism, which fundamentally marks us forever as a child of God (1262-74).

We will then turn to the Sacrament of Confirmation and its close connection not only to the Baptism of Christ, but also to the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost, as Confirmation entails a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on its recipients (1286-89).

Our overview of Confirmation will include its rich symbolism as a sacrament that strengthens our identity as Christians (1293-1301), as well as the myriad effects of the sacrament, which prepares us to bear witness to Christ in word and example (1302-05).

In our next session, we will turn to the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, which marvelously completes our initiation into the Church.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1210 – 1321. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Give some examples of how the Sacrament of Baptism is prefigured in the Old Testament. (1217-22)
What does water signify in these examples?

(2) What was the significance of Christ's Baptism? (1223-25) When did the Church take up the practice of baptizing those who wished to become followers of Christ? (1226)

(3) What is the essential rite of Baptism? (1239-40) What part of the ceremony is most meaningful to me?

Why does the Church baptize infants? The Church baptizes infants because they are born with original sin. They need to be freed from the power of the Evil One and brought into that realm of freedom which belongs to the children of God.

--*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 258

(4) Is Baptism necessary for salvation? (1257)

(5) What are some of the effects of Baptism? (1279-80)

(6) What are the names that have been given to the Sacrament of Confirmation? What is the significance of these names? (1289)

(7) How is the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred? (1300)

(8) What are the effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation? (1302-05)

Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of holy fear in God's presence. Guard what you have received. God the Father has marked you with His sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed His pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts.

–St. Ambrose

(9) What should the preparation for Confirmation entail? (1308-10) Have I helped with RCIA or perhaps served as a sponsor? Who was *mysponsor*? What role has that person played in my spiritual journey?

(10) Baptism and Confirmation are “sacraments of initiation.” Baptism is the door to the Christian life, while Confirmation strengthens the grace given at Baptism. What role has these sacraments played in my life? How do I live out my Baptism and Confirmation? What can I do to help lead others to the Church through the “door” of Baptism and Confirmation?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twelfth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In our last session, we looked at the first two sacraments of initiation, Baptism and Confirmation. Now we turn to the third and final sacrament of initiation, the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's sacrifice, and the "source and summit" of the Christian life, as we receive into our bodies as well as our souls the very Body and Blood of Christ outpoured for us (1322-27). In this lesson, we will explore the vast richness of this sacrament. As we go, we will examine some of the different names for this sacrament, which all bring out certain aspects of this inexhaustible mystery (1328-32).

Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and since then this "breaking of bread" has played a central, defining role in the life of the Church. We will survey the various biblical and historical sources for the celebration of this sacrament (1337-47), as well as its basic format (1348-55).

We will then examine the Eucharist as (a) an act of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, (b) a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, and (c) a personal encounter with Christ, who is truly present on the altar by the power of the Holy Spirit (1356-81). We will see how this "real presence" comes about through what is known as "transubstantiation."

The Mass is not only a sacrifice, but also a sacred banquet in which we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. We will take a closer look at this immense privilege, including how we are to approach the altar (1382-90), the benefits of the Eucharist in the Christian life (1391-1401), and how the Eucharist makes us hunger all the more for eternal glory in the "new heavens and new earth" (1402-05).

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1322 – 1419. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What is the role of the Eucharist in the life of the Church? (1324) What has been the role of the Eucharist in my life?

(2) Eucharist comes from the Greek word for “thanksgiving.” What are some of the other names of this sacrament? (1328-32) Which name appeals most to me?

“O sacred banquet at which Christ is consumed, the memory of His Passion recalled, our soul filled with grace, and our pledge of future glory received.”

–St. Thomas Aquinas

(3) In the context of what Jewish feast did Jesus institute the Eucharist? Why is that important? (1339-40)

(4) What was the principal day that the early Christians gathered to celebrate the Eucharist? (1342-43) How does it strengthen my faith to know that from the beginning Christians have gathered for this purpose?

(5) What are the main parts of the Eucharistic prayer at Mass? (1352-54)

(6) In what sense is the Eucharist a sacrifice? (1366-67) How would you explain this to others?

*Lord Jesus Christ, You gave us the Eucharist
as the memorial of Your suffering and death.
May our worship of this sacrament of Your Body and Blood
help us to experience the salvation You won for us
and the peace of the kingdom
where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. +Amen.*

--Opening prayer, solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

(7) What do we mean by "real presence"? How do I express my faith in the real presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine? (1373-74)

(8) How often should the faithful receive Holy Communion? What should I do to prepare myself for this encounter? (1385-89)

(9) What are some of the fruits of Holy Communion? (1416)

(10) What can I do in the coming week to grow in my appreciation of and love for our Eucharistic Lord?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the thirteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In our last session, we completed our overview of the three sacraments of initiation, namely Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. We saw how Baptism is the “door” to the Christian life, while the Eucharist completes the process of initiation and is the source and summit of the Christian life.

Even though we have received new life through Christ, we hold this treasure in what St. Paul called “earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7) or “earthly tent” (2 Corinthians 5:1), and we remain subject to suffering, illness, and death, not to mention sin.

For this reason, Christ the divine physician (see Mark 2:17) instituted two sacraments of healing, to continue His saving work in us amidst our tribulations in this world. They are the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, which we will take up in this lesson.

We will turn to Reconciliation, or Confession (1423-24), first. We will look at why we need this sacrament despite the forgiveness of sins that takes place at Baptism (1425-29). We will briefly discuss the role of penance, repentance, and daily conversion in the Christian life and how they relate to this sacrament (1430-39). We will sketch the biblical basis for the sacrament and also how it effects not only forgiveness but reconciliation with the Church (1440-49).

Then we will focus on the celebration of the sacrament itself, especially the simple steps each of us must take in order to receive it (1450-60). We will conclude our treatment of Confession by a review of the role of the priest (1461-67), the wonderful effects of the sacrament (1468-70), and Indulgences (1471-79).

We will then briefly survey the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, including its place in salvation history (1500-11), when and how it should be administered (1512-19), and lastly its many salutary effects. (1520-25).

May this session lead us to a greater appreciation of God’s healing action and mercy in our lives. May we truly become ambassadors of Christ’s reconciliation, especially at home and at work.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1420 – 1532. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session’s reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are some of the names for the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1423-24) What do the names teach us about the sacrament? What do I usually call the sacrament?

(2) What does the Catechism mean by "second conversion"? (1428) How does St. Ambrose explain it? (1429)

(3) What is "interior penance"? (1430) What are the three main ways that Christians express their interior penance? (1434)

(4) When did Christ institute the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1485) What authority did Christ give to His apostles? (1443-45)

(5) What are the two essential elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1448)

The four steps for making a good Confession

- (1) Examination of Conscience
- (2) Contrition (sorrow for one's sins)
- (3) Confession of Sins (after which the priest gives absolution)
- (4) Satisfaction (carrying out the penance given by the priest)

(6) How often should Catholics go to Confession? What sins must be confessed? (1457-58)

Formula of Absolution

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

(7) What is my attitude toward illness? What was Christ's attitude? (1503-05) Is there biblical evidence of a sacrament that is administered to the sick? (1510)

(8) Have I ever received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick? Have I witnessed others receiving it? What has been my experience of the sacrament? What are some of its principal effects? (1532)

Did You Know?

- Only bishops and priests may administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.
- One need not be at the point of death to receive it. One merely needs to be in danger of death because of illness or advanced age.
- Anointing of the Sick may be received more than once.
- In the Latin rite, the celebrant anoints the forehead and hands of the sick person while asking the Lord for the special grace of the sacrament.

(9) What is Viaticum? (1524) What sacraments are administered, when possible, as a person nears death? (1525)

(10) What is my attitude toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How would I explain the sacrament to someone who isn't Catholic?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the fourteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

The sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) unite us to Christ and His Church and confer the graces we need to grow in holiness. In the last lesson, we saw how the sacraments of healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick) restore grace when it is lost through sin, and they strengthen us in our pilgrimage of faith.

Now we turn to the sacraments at the service of communion and mission: Holy Orders and Matrimony (1533-36). These sacraments are ordered to the salvation of others. They enable the Church to fulfill her mission to bring the Gospel to others and to unite all men and women in Christ.

We will first examine in this session the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We will explore the idea of “priesthood” in the salvation history (1539-43), culminating in Christ, who was priest, prophet, and king (1544-45). Through this discussion we will come to understand how ordained ministers participate in the one priesthood of Christ for the good of the entire Church (1546-53).

Bishops, priests, and deacons all receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders (1554). The bishop receives the “fullness of the sacrament” (1555-61), with priests as their co-workers (1562-68), while deacons assist the bishop and priests in various ways (1569-71).

We will conclude our session with an overview of the rite of ordination itself (1572-74), including who administers the sacrament (1575-76) and who is eligible to receive it (1577-80). We will also touch upon the effects of the sacrament, including its indelible character (1581-84) as well as the special grace of the Holy Spirit given to the ordained minister (1585-89) for the good of the entire Church—in other words, for *us*!

As we learn more about this sacrament, let us thank and praise the Lord by sending out shepherds to His flock in every generation!

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1533 – 1600. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session’s reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are the two sacraments at the service of communion? (1534) What is distinctive about these two sacraments? (1535)

(2) Why is the sacrament called "Holy Orders"? (1537-38)

(3) Name some Old Testament figures who foreshadowed Christ's institution of the New Covenant priesthood? (1539-44) What do I know about them?

Did You Know?

In 2009-10, the Church throughout the world celebrated the Year for Priests. The Church especially honored throughout this special year St. John Vianney, the renowned Cure of Ars and patron saint of parish priests. In fact, the Year for Priests marked the 150th anniversary of the holy priest's death.

(4) If Christ is our true high priest whose once-for-all sacrifice redeemed us, why does the Church have priests? (1545)

(5) What are the three degrees of Holy Orders? (1554)

The *bishop*, to whom the care of the local Church is entrusted, is the visible head and foundation of unity for that Church. For the sake of that Church, as vicar of Christ, he fulfills the office of shepherd and is assisted by his own priests and deacons. Bishops receive the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

(6) How do I understand the ministry of priests? (1567)

(7) What is the essential rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders? (1573) Have I ever attended an ordination? What was it like?

What About Deacons?

The *deacon*, configured to Christ, the servant of all, is ordained for service to the Church. He carries out this service under the authority of his bishop by the ministry of:

- the Word
- divine worship
- pastoral care
- charity

Seminarians preparing for the priesthood have traditionally been ordained to the diaconate prior to receiving priestly ordination. This is known as the *transitional diaconate*.

Since Vatican II (1962-65), the *permanent diaconate* has been restored in the West. (The Eastern Churches had always retained it.) As the name suggests, this is a permanent office and not a stepping stone to the priesthood. Permanent deacons may be married or celibate.

(8) Who confers the Sacrament of Holy Orders? (1575-76) Who can receive this sacrament? (1577-80)

(9) How is the common priesthood of all the baptized distinct from the ministerial priesthood of those who have received Holy Orders? (1592)

(10) How has my faith been strengthened by the homilies given by bishops, priests, and deacons? How has my faith been renewed and bolstered by the ministry of priests in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? What can I do to show my parish priest how much I appreciate him?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the fifteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*! With this lesson, we are completing our treatment of the sacraments.

In this lesson, we will survey the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Matrimony, or Marriage. Let's recall that the Church exists to extend Christ through space and time, as evangelization is at the core of her identity. In that context, we've seen that Holy Orders is especially geared to extending Christ through *space*, not only within the priest's parish or diocese, but also to mission lands.

Marriage, meanwhile, is also a sacrament in service of communion. It is especially geared toward extending Christ through *time*, as the faith is passed from one generation to the next.

Marriage was created by God, not man, and it was redeemed by Christ and elevated to the level of a Christian sacrament, as the efficacious sign of the covenant of Christ and His Church. (1610-17)

We will examine the celebration of the sacrament, especially the consent. In that regard, marriage is unique among the sacraments: It is the only one that the spouses confer on each other (of course, with the Church as witness). And they confer the sacrament through their mutual consent. (1621-32)

We will survey the goods, purposes, and effects of marriage as a complete gift of self that is both unitive and procreative. (1638-54) In doing so, we will also discuss some of the more common pastoral issues, such as one of the parties not being Catholic (1633-37), and phenomenon of divorce and remarriage. (1649-51)

Lastly, we will come full circle to the family as a "domestic Church," which will shed light on the mission given to couples on their wedding day. (1655-58)

You will note that we will be passing over the brief sections on sacramentals (1667-79) and Christian funerals (1680-90), so that next week we will begin our treatment of Christian morality.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1601 – 1666. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Is marriage a merely human institution? (1603) What was God's plan in creating us male and female? (1604-05)

(2) Where did Jesus perform His first public miracle? What does this event teach us about marriage? (1613)

(3) Does God call all men and women to marriage? (1618-20)

(4) What is meant by "matrimonial consent"? (1625-26)

Ready to take the plunge?

Before the couple gives their consent to marriage, the priest or deacon asks the couple individually the following three questions to ensure that the couple is able to make such a lifelong commitment:

(1) Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

(2) Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?

(3) Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church? (The minister may omit this question when the couple is advanced in years.)

--Rite of Marriage, 24

(5) What is a mixed marriage? What does the Church say about mixed marriages? (1633-34) What has been my own personal experience of mixed marriages?

(6) What are the two primary effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony? (1638) How might these effects be counter-cultural in today's society?

Did You Know?

In 2001, Blessed Pope John Paul II declared "blessed" the married couple Luigi and Maria Quattrocchi. This was the first time in the Church's history that the Pope has beatified a married couple.

This 20th century Italian couple had four children, three of whom entered religious life. Luigi served as deputy attorney-general of Italy, and they opened their home to refugees during World War II. Maria was a renowned catechist and speaker, and she was a member of Women's Catholic Action.

"The richness of faith and married love shown by Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi is a living demonstration of what the Second Vatican Council said about all the faithful being called to holiness," the Pope said at the beatification. "They lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way," demonstrating that sainthood for married couples is "possible and beautiful."

(7) What are the purposes of marriage? (1643)

(8) What is the Church's approach toward divorce and remarriage? (1649-51)

(9) Why is the home considered a domestic Church? (1656-57, 1666)

(10) Think of married couples whom you really admire. What qualities have helped them build a strong, Christian marriage? How has their marriage strengthened my faith?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the sixteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

With this session, we begin our treatment of the third pillar of the Catechism: Christian morality. The Catechism calls this section “Life in Christ,” and rightly so. The Creed sets forth what we believe. Through the Sacraments, we celebrate the mysteries of faith, which are made real and effective in our lives. Now, as sons and daughters of God, we examine how we are to live in the world as Christians. That’s what Christian morality is all about.

As we begin, we will recap some basic truths, starting with our creation in the image of God. (1701-15) We were created with the capacity to know, love, and serve God. Original sin wounded our capacity to know the truth and choose the good. Now, through Christ, we have access to the grace to overcome our frailty and sin so as to enter the fullness of life.

Then we will consider mankind’s natural desire for happiness, or “beatitude” or “blessedness.” (1716-29) This innate desire finds its fulfillment in Christ, particularly as expressed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-12). In God alone do we find the everlasting happiness for which we long (see Psalm 63:1).

From there we will turn our attention to the subject of human freedom. (1730-48) God does not force His will on us. Rather, He created us with free will, so we are able to choose between good and evil. (1732) For that reason, we are truly responsible for our actions. We are to use our freedom to choose what is true, good, and beautiful.

God does not make us love Him. Rather, love of God and neighbor is a free choice, and through our daily lives as Christians, our thoughts, words, and actions should reflect this decision to love. We can therefore use our freedom to honor God through good actions, or abuse our freedom by choosing to sin, which remains a radical possibility for all Christians.

We will then break down the components of a good moral action. They may be summarized by saying we should do the right thing at the right time for the right reason. (1749-61)

Next, we will consider the passions, or feelings, and how they affect moral decision-making. (1762-75)

After that, we will conclude this session with our consideration of moral conscience (1776-1802), a concept that is often misunderstood in our libertine, relativistic culture. For example, we may hear it said, “It’s right for me, so it ultimately doesn’t matter what the Church says.” Yet, we will see that conscience must always be rooted in choosing what is truly good, and not necessarily what might “feel” good at the moment.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1691 – 1802. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are the "two ways"? (Matthew 7:13-14) What do the "two ways" teach us about Christian morality? (1696)

(2) What are the principal components of Catholic teaching, or catechesis, when it comes to Christian morality? (1697-98)

"Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God."

--St. Leo the Great (45th pope, 440-61)

(3) How is man divided in himself? (1707) How does Christ remedy this division? (1709)

"We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated."

--St. Augustine (354-430)

(4) What are some of the biblical expressions used to describe the beatitude, or happiness, to which God calls us? (1720) How do /envision eternal life?

(5) How do we attain beatitude? (1722) What moral choices does it entail? (1723)

(6) What is human freedom? (1731) How is freedom distinct from license?

"It seems necessary to reflect on the whole of the Church's moral teaching, with the precise goal of recalling certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied. . . . It is no longer a matter of limited and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine, on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions. At the root of these presuppositions is the more or less obvious influence of currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth."

--Pope John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor ("Splendor of Truth"), no. 4

(7) What are the three sources of a moral act? (1750)

(8) Are some actions always morally wrong, notwithstanding one's good intentions? (1753, 1756) How would I explain this truth to a friend?

(9) What are some of the causes of errors of judgment when it comes to moral conduct? (1792)

(10) How do I approach the subject of morality? Do I tend to view Christian morality as merely following a bunch of rules, or as embracing God's blueprint for human happiness? How has this section of the Catechism affected my perspective on this subject?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the seventeenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In the last session, we began our overview of the Catechism's treatment of Christian morality by focusing on the dignity of the human person. We discussed our creation in the image of God, our natural longing for happiness, and the gift of freedom, through which we choose to love and honor God.

Now we will survey the virtues as good habits that help us do the right thing. This overview will begin with the human, or moral, virtues (1803-1809), which dispose us to live upright, balanced lives, aided by divine grace. (1810-11)

Then we will turn to the theological virtues of faith (1814-16), hope (1817-21), and charity (1822-29), which equip us for life "in the Spirit." (1830-32)

Then we will examine the Catechism's presentation on the subject of sin, including the definition of sin (1849-51), the types of sin (1852-53), the distinction between mortal and venial sin (1854-64), and the corrosive effects of sin, leading to vice and "structures of sin." (1865-69)

Above all, however, in our treatment of sin we will focus on the antidote to sin, namely God's mercy (1846-48), which is greater than our capacity to sin: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5: 20).

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1803 – 1876. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What are the four principal human virtues called? What are they? (1804)

Pleasurable Goods	Intemperate Pursuit of Good	Virtuous Pursuit of Good
Food/Drink	Gluttony, Drunkenness	Moderation, Sobriety
Self-Assurance	Immodesty, Self-Absorption	Modesty
Ease/Comfort	Sloth	Diligence, Vigilance
Repel Attack	Anger	Meekness
Sexual Pleasure	Lust	Chastity
Self-Esteem	Pride	Humility

(2) What are theological virtues? How are they distinct from other virtues? (1812-13)

(3) What important reminder does CCC 1816 give us? How can I better live this teaching in my daily life?

(4) What is the virtue of hope? (1817) Why is this virtue so important? (1818)

(5) How does the virtue of charity affect our relationship with God? (1828)

Inspiring Scripture Verses on Charity

So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love,
and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

-1 John 4:16

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude.
Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong,
but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

-1 Corinthians 13:4-7

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

-Jeremiah 31:3

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

-John 15:13

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son
to be the expiation for our sins.

-1 John 4:10

(6) What are the gifts and fruits of the Spirit? (1831-32) Have I noticed the "fruits of the Spirit" at work in my life? When?

(7) How does the Catechism define sin? (1849-50) How would I define sin in my own words?

(8) What is the difference between a mortal sin and a venial sin? What constitutes a "mortal sin"? (1854-57)

(9) What are the seven deadly sins? (1866) Which of these deadly or capital sins causes me the most difficulty?

(10) Based on what I've learned over the past two weeks, how would I explain "conscience"--with charity and sensitivity--to a friend or relative who says that he or she is simply following his or her conscience in rejecting Catholic teaching and engaging in sinful activity?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the eighteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Today we will shift our attention to the human family, as we examine some of the basic principles of Catholic social teaching, which begin with the premise that we are social beings. (1877-89) These principles have been developed over the past century, and they help us to apply our Catholic faith to pressing societal issues.

As participants in society, we need to understand the concept of *authority* as a key component of a just society (1897-1904) Authority must be exercised well and with due regard for the principle of *subsidiarity*, and those under authority owe obedience to just laws.

Another vitally important concept is that of the *common good*, which is nothing other than the creation of optimal conditions for the pursuit of happiness. (1905-06) It is the role of the state to promote and defend the common good of its citizens (1907-12), though all citizens, according to their state of life, have the responsibility to participate in the fostering of the common good of all. (1913-17)

Lastly, we will tackle the subject of *social justice*, through which men and women in society obtain what is their due (1928). We will look at how social justice requires that the innate, God-given dignity and equality of all human persons be respected (1929-38). Even more, social justice beckons us to go beyond what is strictly required, as we develop the virtue of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the human family. (1939-42)

While this session will introduce us to some terms that may be new to us, we will also recognize Godly wisdom that we may have already discovered in our own efforts to apply the Gospel to real-life situations in the world.

Catholic social teaching, then, is particularly relevant to lay Catholics, as we seek to be a leaven in our homes, workplaces, and communities, and as we answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1877 – 1948. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session’s reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What is the relationship between the human person and society? (1879)

(2) What is subsidiarity? (1883) Give an example of this principle at work.

(3) What is authority? (1897) Where does it come from? (1899) What are its limits? (1903)

"Each person, in some way, is called to work for the common good, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own."

–Blessed Pope John Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2005

(4) What is the "common good"? (1906) What are its three essential ingredients? (1907-09)

(5) How do we participate in promoting the common good? (1914-15) How does this “participation” look in my own life?

(6) What is social justice? (1928) How does society promote social justice?

During his long pontificate, Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) issued a staggering eighty-seven encyclicals on a broad range of topics affecting the faith and life of the Church.

One of his most significant encyclicals was *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things," 1891), on the subject of capital, labor, and social justice. This encyclical outlines the principles of Catholic social teaching that have been built upon over the past century and are now organized in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which may be viewed at the Vatican website (www.vatican.va).

Since Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum*, the Church's social teaching has been further developed in subsequent encyclicals by other popes. Often they issued their encyclical on a multiple of ten years after *Rerum Novarum*, in honor of that seminal document. Here is a list of some of the key Church documents on this timely subject, which are also available at the Vatican website and other online sources:

- *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor), Pope Leo XIII, 1891
- *Quadragesimo Anno* (After Forty Years), Pope Pius XI, 1931
- *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress), Pope John XXIII, 1961
- *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII, 1963
- *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), Vatican II, 1965
- *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), Pope Paul VI, 1967
- *Octogesima Adveniens* (Coming Eightieth Anniversary), Pope Paul VI, 1971
- *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work), Blessed Pope John Paul II, 1981
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern), Blessed Pope John Paul II, 1987
- *Centesimus Annus* (The Hundredth Year), Blessed Pope John Paul II, 1991
- *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), Blessed Pope John Paul II, 1995
- *The Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002
- *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005
- *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

(7) How is respect for the human person related to social justice? (1929-33)

(8) How do I understand human equality and differences? (1945-47)

(9) What is solidarity? (1939) How is it manifested? (1940) What can I do to foster bonds of solidarity within my own sphere of relationships?

(10) How familiar was I with Catholic social teaching prior to this session? What new insights did I draw from this session? How does Catholic social teaching affect my own life?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the nineteenth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

This week we are continuing our survey of Christian morality, the third pillar of the Catechism. We now turn to the subsection of the Catechism's treatment of morality entitled "God's Salvation: Law and Grace."

We will first examine the moral law (1949-86), seen as God's fatherly instruction for our happiness. God's law through which He governs all of creation is known as the *eternal law*. All other laws are but our participation in the providence of the living God.

In our consideration of law, we will especially focus on the *natural moral law* (1954-60), which is God's law written on every human heart, and *revealed law* (1961-74), which God has made known to us through the course of salvation history, culminating in the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will then touch upon three concepts that are critically important in the understanding of how God saves us and calls us to grow in holiness. We will discuss *justification* (1987-95), through which we become righteous in the sight of God. Then we will consider *grace* (1996-2005), God's gift of His life and love to us. Finally, we will discover how our free cooperation with divine grace results in a proper understanding of *merit* (2006-16).

The last part of this session will explore how the moral life relates to the life and mission of the Church (2030-46). The Magisterium of the Church is the authentic interpreter of the moral law, and it also enacts laws and precepts to help foster the spiritual and moral life of the faithful.

May all of us, through the witness of our joyful fidelity to God's moral law, draw others to the one, true God, build up the Church, and foster what Blessed Pope John Paul II called a "civilization of life and love."

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 1941 – 2051. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) How does the Catechism define “law”? (1951) What images come to mind when I think of law? What is the source of all law? What are some expressions of the moral law? (1952)

(2) What is the natural law? (1954, 1978-79)

Criminal law traditionally speaks of two types of crimes—those that are *malum prohibitum* (evil because they are prohibited) and *malum in se* (evil in themselves). An example of the former would be a 35 mph speed limit. Driving 40 mph isn't evil in itself, but it would be a violation of the traffic code.

Other more serious crimes, like murder, stealing, and rape, are evil in themselves, and the penal code merely codifies what the people already know to be true. While modern secular society doesn't acknowledge the “natural law,” we see it at work here, as people know in their heart of hearts that certain actions are wrong even apart from the “law.”

(3) How does the Church view the Old Law today? (1963) What attitude do I have toward the Old Testament, particularly the Ten Commandments?

(4) The New Law, or the Law of the Gospel, ushered in by Jesus Christ, represents the fullness of God's moral law. What are some other names for the New Law? (1972) What is its relationship to the Old Law? (1984)

The Types of Law

All law that we experience flows from God's ***eternal law***, which governs all the actions and events of the universe. It comes to us in two ways.

First, there is the ***natural law***, which is written on the heart of every man and woman, urging us to seek what is good, and to avoid what is evil.

Second, there is ***revealed law***, which God has made known to us through divine Revelation.

The revealed law includes the ***Old Law***, represented by the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Revealed law – and law itself – finds its fulfillment and perfection in the ***New Law, the Law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ***.

Lastly, there are ***human laws***, which are manmade and intended to ensure good order in the human community. They are sometimes called ***positive laws***.

There are two types of human laws. ***Civil laws*** govern our daily affairs as citizens of this world. ***Church laws*** govern the living out of the Christian faith as citizens of the kingdom of God.

(5) In my own words, what is justification? (1994, 2017-20)

(6) What is the relationship between grace and human freedom? (2001-02)

(7) How would I explain the concept of “merit” to a Christian who thinks Catholics “earn” their way to heaven through good works? (2007-08)

(8) Is everyone called to holiness? (2013-15) Who have been examples to me of holiness and the perfection of charity?

The Precepts of the Church

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and remain free from work or activity that could impede the sanctification of such days.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

— From *CCC 2041-43*

(9) What is the role of the Magisterium when it comes to the Church's moral teachings? (2050-51; for more in-depth explanation, see 2032-40)

(10) How do I understand the relationship between Christian morality and the Gospel message? What can I do in my own life to strengthen the connection between what I believe and how I live?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twentieth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

Over the next two lessons, we will survey Christian morality through the lens of the Ten Commandments, or Decalogue (2052-82), through which God originally communicated His Law to Moses and the chosen people.

In this lesson, we will examine the first three commandments, which focus on our duties to God. Next week, we will turn to the remaining commandments, which focus on our duties toward our neighbor.

The Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the commandments, but to fulfill and elevate them. He lived them perfectly and interpreted them according to the twofold commandment of love—namely, to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In the First Commandment, we will focus on the worship that is due to the one, true God, and how the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity lead us to the practice of true religion. (2082-2109) We will also examine what the commandment means when it prohibits the worship of “other gods” and the making of “graven images.” (2110-32).

Then we will turn to the Second Commandment. We will discover what the commandment calls us to do (honor God’s holy name) and also what it forbids (blasphemy, perjury, false oaths, etc.). (2142-55) We will then see in all this the importance of the Christian name one receives at Baptism. (2156-59)

Lastly, we will consider the Third Commandment, which in Christian usage requires us to keep Sunday--the Lord’s Day--holy. (2168-95). We will examine not only the Sunday Mass obligation, but also how we are called to make Sunday a day of rest and “re-creation.”

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 2052 – 2195. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session’s reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Where are the Ten Commandments listed in the Bible? Why are they also called the Decalogue? (2056) How many of them can I name?

(2) What is the place of the Ten Commandments in the life of the Church? (2064-68) What has been the place of the Ten Commandments in my own life?

(3) The First Commandment beckons us to foster the theological virtues of faith (2088), hope (2090-92), and charity (2093). How would I summarize each of these theological virtues in a sentence or two?

"Not yet" Time for Hope

Hope is our confident expectation that we will one day be with God. It is the virtue of "not yet," as we're still striving for future glory as pilgrims on earth. The two major sins against hope are despair and presumption.

Despair turns the "not yet" of hope into a never. On the other hand, presumption, in its various forms, turns the "not yet" into an already, as we practically reject the need for conversion, grace, and/or perseverance.

(4) The First Commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me." What are some ways that one can violate this commandment? (2110, 2138-40; for more detailed information, see 2111-28)

(5) The First Commandment also provides that "You shall not make for yourself a graven image . . ." The Church is known for her promotion of religious art, and many Catholic homes, schools, and businesses have crucifixes, as well as statues, icons, and other images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints. Does the display of these images constitute a violation of the First Commandment? (2129-32)

(6) "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so" (James 3:10). What does this Scripture verse teach me? What resolution(s) can I make today to improve the quality of my speech?

The Holy Name of Jesus

The Church teaches that adoration and respect for the name of Jesus should permeate all preaching and catechesis (CCC 2145). St. Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444), a Franciscan priest, was especially known for spreading devotion to the holy name of Jesus. Here is a representative quote from this holy preacher:

"Jesus, Name full of glory, grace, love and strength! You are the refuge of those who repent, our banner of warfare in this life, the medicine of souls, the comfort of those who mourn, the delight of those who believe, the light of those who preach the true faith, the wages of those who toil, the healing of the sick. To You our devotion aspires; by You our prayers are received; we delight in contemplating You. O Name of Jesus, You are the glory of all the saints for eternity. Amen."

(7) What is the relationship between the Second Commandment and the Sacrament of Baptism? (2156)

(8) Why do we observe the Lord's Day, or Sabbath, on Sunday? (2174)

The Divine Praises

*Blessed be God.
Blessed be His Holy Name.
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
Blessed be the name of Jesus.
Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints.*

The Divine Praises are frequently said during Benediction services and are frequently offered in reparation for blasphemy and profane speech.

(9) How are Catholics called to "keep holy the Lord's Day"? (2192-95)

(10) What does my usual Sunday look like? How do I keep the day holy? What can I do to enhance my observance of the Lord's Day?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twenty-first session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In our last session, we began our two-part consideration of the Catechism's treatment of the Ten Commandments. We examined in some detail the first three commandments, which concern our obligations toward God.

Now we turn our attention to the remaining commandments, which relate to love of neighbor.

We begin with the Fourth Commandment, which deals with the most fundamental human institution: the family. God Himself instituted the family as the union of one man and one woman united in the covenant of marriage, together with their children, who form a "domestic Church" (2197-2213). We will survey the duties of children (2214-20) and parents (2221-33), as well as how family members are to relate to society (2234-46).

In our treatment of the Fifth Commandment, we will see that "thou shall not kill" not only prohibits murder, but also calls us to respect all human life (2259-83), maintain the dignity of the human person (2284-2301), and at all times foster and safeguard peace (2302-17).

The Sixth (2331-2400) and Ninth (2514-33) Commandments summarize the Church's teaching on human sexuality. Drawing upon Blessed Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, we will examine God's blueprint for sexuality and marriage. We will not only survey the sins against these commandments, but also virtues, such as chastity and modesty, that help us live the beautiful lives to which God has called us.

The Seventh Commandment forbids the unjust taking or keeping of someone else's property and calls for good stewardship of creation (2401-18). This commandment not only governs our own individual conduct, but also lays the groundwork for the Church's social teaching (2419-25) in areas such as economics (2426-36) and international cooperation (2437-42). This commandment leads us beyond mere justice to authentic charity, expressed above all in our love for the poor (2443-49). The Tenth Commandment takes us even deeper, exhorting us to love and serve God, not material wealth (2534-57).

Lastly, the Eighth Commandment (2464-2513) beckons us to speak and live the truth. We will see that instead of bearing "false witness" we are called to live honest, upright lives as "children of the light" (1 Thessalonians 5:15), thus bearing witness to the Truth: Jesus Christ.

May our study of this section of the Catechism lead us to see the Commandments not so much as a list of prohibited acts, but as a blueprint for loving, healthy relationships with God and neighbor.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 2196 – 2557. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) What is the basis for the honor and respect that parents owe their children? (2214-15) How are children called to show respect toward their parents? (2216) If I'm a parent, how do I train my children to live this commandment?

(2) How would I summarize the parents' role in the faith formation of their children? (2221, 2223, 2225 – 26).

(3) Why is human life sacred? (2258) In what sense are we living in a "culture of death"? What can we do to defend and promote the dignity of human life in all its stages?

"You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish."

--Didache (first century apostolic teaching)

"God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."

--Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), no. 51

(4) What is the sin of scandal? (2284) Why is it a sin against the Fifth Commandment? What can I do this week to build people up and lead them to Christ?

(5) What is the virtue of chastity? (2337) What are some of the means of growing in chastity that are recommended by the Catechism? (2340) Why is chastity formation so challenging in our culture?

(6) When is it moral to regulate births? What are some immoral means of regulating births? (2368-69, 2399)

(7) Is gambling a sin against the Seventh Commandment? Explain. (2413)

"Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."

--St. John Chrysostom, bishop and doctor of the Church (c. 347-407)

(8) What is the Christian perspective on work? (2427-28) How does this shape my own attitude toward work?

(9) Have I ever judged someone's thoughts, words, and actions and turned out to be wrong? How do I feel when I'm on the other end of that judgment? How does the Church encourage us to avoid rash judgment? (2477-78)

(10) Has my study of the Catechism's treatment of the Ten Commandments deepened my understanding of Christian morality? What new insights on the Ten Commandments have I gained from this course?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twenty-second session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church!*

With this session, we turn our attention to the fourth and final pillar of the Catechism: *Christian prayer*. This is the shortest of the four sections of the Catechism, but it is a crucially important one if we are to develop an intimate, living relationship with the Lord.

In this session, we will begin by defining prayer (2558 and following), with a particular emphasis on prayer as *gift* (2559-61), *covenant* (2362-64), and *communion* (2365).

Throughout salvation history, God has called mankind to Himself in a mysterious, reciprocal encounter known as prayer. (2566-67) We will survey the experience of prayer in salvation history, beginning with the Old Testament. (2568 and following)

Of particular interest will be the prayer of Abraham (2570-72), Moses (2574-77), David (2578-80), and the prophets (2581-84). We will also examine the Psalms as the epitome of Old Testament prayer. (2585-89)

We will conclude this introductory session on prayer by considering the prayer of Jesus Himself. (2599-2606) From His example and instruction, we will draw lessons for growing in our own prayer life (2607-16).

Lastly, we will consider the prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially her Magnificat, whose entire life of prayer may be summarized as a generous offering of herself to God. (2617-19, 22)

May these sessions on prayer lead all of us to make more fully our own the words of Mary: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord!" (Luke 1:46)

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 2558 – 2622. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) How does the Catechism describe prayer? (2559-65)

"For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy."

--St. Therese of Lisieux

(2) Is prayer for everybody? Why or why not? (2566-67)

(3) How is Abraham a model of prayer for all believers? (2570-72) Can I think of other noteworthy examples of prayer in the Old Testament?

(4) Aside from the "responsorial psalm" at Mass, do I ever read or pray the Psalms? What are some of the characteristics of the Psalms? (2589)

Psalm 63:1-9

*O God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.*

*For your love is better than life, my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life, in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet, my mouth shall praise you with joy.*

*On my bed I remember you. On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help; in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.*

(5) Where did Jesus learn how to pray? (2599) Where and when did Jesus typically pray? (2600-02)

(6) How does Jesus teach His followers to pray? (2607, 2621)

(7) List three parables on prayer that are singled out in the Catechism. What does Our Lord teach us in these parables? (2613)

(8) How do we know that God hears our prayers? (2615-16)

Does God answer my prayers?

When it comes to prayers of supplication or petition—in other words, when we ask God for specific things—we naturally wonder when we don't get "results."

Three things should be kept in mind when this happens.

First, we should reflect on our motivation in seeking divine assistance. Are we praying to the Holy Trinity as the center and goal of our existence? Or are we merely seeking to "use" God just to get what we want?

Second, are we asking for something that is truly good for us? If what we're seeking is not good, or if our hearts are divided, then we shouldn't expect God to give it to us. He desires our well-being, even when we don't (see James 4:3).

Third, we must become truly convinced that we don't know how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26). We turn to God in our need, not always realizing what we truly desire is much greater and deeper than our feeble requests. Our Father already knows what we need, yet awaits our prayers out of respect for our dignity as His children, eager to grant us His blessings.

Prayer is meant to change *us*, not God. God does answer our prayers, but often in ways we don't expect, as His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). As we grow in our relationship with God in prayer, we come to understand more intimately that God richly provides for all our needs.

(9) What do the following episodes from the Gospels teach us about the Blessed Virgin Mary's prayer?

- (a) Her "fiat" at the Annunciation (2617, 2622)
- (b) The Wedding at Cana (2618)
- (c) The Crucifixion (2618)
- (d) Her "Magnificat" at the Visitation (2619)

(10) In this session, we have surveyed the topic of prayer in the Old Testament and in the life of Christ. Did I gain any new insights on prayer in this session? What people in my life have been models of prayer for me?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twenty-third session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In this session, we will continue our overview of the Catechism's treatment of Christian prayer. Last time we surveyed prayer in the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus. Now we turn our attention to prayer in the life of the Christian community, the Church.

We will begin by reviewing the various forms of prayer in the Christian tradition, such as prayers of praise and thanksgiving (2623-49). Then we will go deeper into the Church's rich tradition, identifying certain perennial wellsprings of prayer, including Scripture, the liturgy, the theological virtues, and daily Christian living (2650-62).

Next, we will explore the section on the "way of prayer" (2663-82), noting in particular the trinitarian dimension of prayer as well as Our Lady's role in Christian prayer. This will lead to consideration of "guides for prayer" (2683-96) within the communion of saints, beginning with one's own family. We will also briefly discuss the practical issue of *where* to pray.

Then we will tackle the section on the "life of prayer" (2697-2724). We will focus on the three main expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. Along the way, we will provide practical guidance. After all, it's not enough simply to know about the Church's teaching on prayer; we must strive to put it into practice in our lives!

We will also consider prayer as a "spiritual battle" (2725), which calls forth from us each day a renewed commitment to the Lord. In that context, we will therefore consider some of the primary objections (2726-28), difficulties (2729-31), and temptations (2732-33) that challenge us to go deeper in our childlike trust in God. We will address head on the issue of why sometimes it seems that God is not answering our prayers (2734-37), and why we can be ever confident that our prayers, united with the prayer of Jesus, really are effective (2738-41).

Scripture tell us to "pray always" (1 Thess. 5:17). We will look at how this is possible, and how the spiritual battle of prayer is ultimately won through humble, trusting, and persevering love, which must permeate every facet of our lives (2742-45).

We will conclude this session with a brief consideration of what is known as the "priestly prayer" of Jesus recorded in John 17 (2746-51). This remarkable prayer, offered at the "hour" of His sacrifice, sums up the work of creation and redemption, and it provides a most fitting segue to next week's session on the Lord's Prayer.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 2623 – 2758. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) How does Acts 2:42 describe the prayer of the first Christian community? (2624) How is this verse reflected in the prayer of the Church today? In my prayer?

(2) What are some of the sources or wellsprings of prayer? (2660, 62) How can I more fully drink of this "living water"?

"I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally. . . . My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath."

--St. John Vianney

(3) How do we have access to the Father? (2664) Why is it important to pray "in Jesus' name"? (2666-68) Who draws us to call upon Jesus' name? (2670)

(4) Mary is sometimes called the *hodigitria*, which means “she who shows the way.” How does this title relate to prayer? (2674) What are the two principal movements of prayer to Mary? (2675)

(5) Christian tradition has provided us with three basic expressions of the life prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, contemplation. What do they have in common? (2721) How are they distinct from one another? (2722-24)

Diving into Meditation

Sometimes meditative prayer can seem a little daunting. Remembering the “three R’s” may help you keep on track during your prayer time:

(1) Recollect. In other words, become quiet before the Lord, gently invite the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer, and perhaps read (and re-read) a short passage of Scripture or other spiritual reading that will provide the starting point for the meditation.

(2) Reflection. Slowly reflect on Scripture. Reread the passage. What is the Lord saying to you? How does this apply to your life? Is there anything on your heart that you want to say to Jesus?

(3) Resolution. As your prayer time concludes, what resolution(s) can you take with you the rest of the day? Try to recall and renew the resolution(s) during the rest of the day. Thank the Holy Spirit for this time of prayer.

(6) How is prayer a spiritual battle? Who is the enemy? (2725)

(7) How should we deal with distractions in our prayer? (2729) What personal quality do we need to remain sober and alert in our prayer? (2730)

Dryness in Prayer

“Every Christian who strives for holiness of life experiences dryness of soul. It is to most people a heart-rending experience. . . .

“Dryness leads us gently from vocal prayer, where we learn to speak to God; to Meditation, where we think of God; to Contemplation, where our heart merely gazes upon Him with a love too deep for words.”

--Mother Angelica, EWTN

(8) What are the two principal temptations in prayer? (2732-33) What might be some ways to combat these temptations and become more fervent in our prayer?

(9) Scripture says that we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). How is that possible? (2742-43) What is the alternative? (2744)

“We must pray without ceasing--in every occurrence and employment of our lives--that prayer which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God as in a constant communication with Him.”

--St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821, first American-born saint)

(10) John 17:1-26 is called the priestly prayer of Jesus, which He prayed at the Last Supper when His "hour" came. (2746) Slowly, meditatively read John 17. What strikes me the most about this prayer? Why?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

Review

Welcome to the twenty-fourth session of our journey through the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*!

In this session, we will survey the Lord's Prayer, or "Our Father," which has always held a privileged place in the Church's liturgy and spiritual tradition.

We will begin by looking at the biblical origin of the prayer, and why St. Thomas Aquinas would call it "the most perfect of prayers" (2759-66). Not only is the Our Father the prayer of Christ, but it is also the prayer of the Church (2767-72). Therefore, we will survey how the Our Father is an integral part of the Church's liturgical life.

We will then examine the prayer line by line, beginning with the key opening phrase "Our Father" (2777-93). When we say "our," we recognize our new relationship with the persons of the Trinity as well as our connectedness to our brothers and sisters in Christ. We call God "Father" as His sons and daughters in Christ.

We complete the opening line by saying, "who art in heaven" (2794-96). We thereby acknowledge that our heavenly inheritance as God's children is the goal of our earthly pilgrimage. With those words, we also call to mind that God, who transcends space and time, is present in our hearts.

Then we will come to the seven petitions of the Our Father. The object of the first three petitions is the glory of God. We hallow His name (2807-15), we seek His kingdom (2816-21), and we desire that His holy will be done in our lives and in our world (2822-27).

Next, in the last four petitions, we bring to God our needs and wants. We seek nourishment (2828-37), forgiveness (2838-45), resolve in our Christian commitment (2846-49), and ultimate victory in the epic struggle of good vs. evil (2850-54).

We conclude the prayer with our own "Amen." When we do that, we say our "yes" to the prayer of the Church and make it our own.

Read

Now read *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Numbers 2759 – 2865. It is helpful to pray before you read. The Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action (CCC 2670).

Reflect

Responding to the following questions will bring focus to essential points of this session's reading and help prepare you to get the most out of the upcoming lesson. If something is unclear to you, make a note to bring it up during the discussion.

(1) Why is the Our Father sometimes called the "Lord's Prayer"? (2759, 2765) Why does the Catechism refer to it as "the quintessential prayer of the Church"? (2776)

(2) Why do we begin this prayer by invoking God as "our Father"? (2798, 2801) What thoughts, feelings, or images come to mind when I think of God as "our Father"?

Where is heaven?

The Lord's Prayer invokes God the Father, who "art in heaven." What does that mean?

Blessed Pope John Paul II described heaven as "a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. It is our meeting with the Father which takes place in the risen Christ through the communion of the Holy Spirit." It is the fulfillment of God's desire to be one with each of us, as Jesus is one with His Father (see John 17:20-24).

The Church does not know a specific place for heaven, except to know that heaven is union with God, "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12) in what is known as the beatific vision, without the mediation of any creature. It far exceeds anything we can possibly imagine (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).

For more on this subject, go back and review CCC 1023-29

(3) What is the basic structure of the Lord's Prayer? (2803-05) Have I thought of the prayer in those terms before?

(4) What do we mean when we say, "hallowed be thy name"? (2807) How do I "hallow" God's name? (See 2813-15 for assistance!)

(5) To what does "thy kingdom come" refer? (2818) How is this petition granted in our lives? (2821)

(6) Why do we pray for God's will to be done? (2860)

There was a farmer traveling with St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who asked the holy abbot why he kept his eyes downward instead of looking at the beautiful countryside.

"To avoid distractions while I pray," responded Bernard.

"I'm never distracted when I pray," boasted the farmer.

"Let's make a bet," said the saint. "If you can say the Our Father without one distraction, I'll give you this mule I'm riding."

The farmer agreed and began praying aloud, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. . . ."

Then he paused, looked at St. Bernard, and said, "Does that include the saddle and bridle, too?"

- Adapted from *Saintly Solutions to Life's Problems*, by Fr. Joseph Esper (Sophia Institute Press)

(7) What is our daily bread? (2837, 2861)

(8) Why do we say, “forgive us our trespasses”? (2839) Why does petition go on to add, “as we forgive . . .”? (2842)

(9) What’s the difference between a trial and a temptation? (2847) What are we implying when we say, “Lead us not into temptation?” (2848-49)

Final Doxology

When we say the Our Father privately, we typically conclude the prayer by saying, “. . . but deliver us from evil. Amen.” At Mass, however, after we say, “deliver us from evil,” the priest prays:

“Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Then we respond, “For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.”

This concluding section of this prayer at Mass is called the “final doxology” (CCC 2760, 2855). It is not found in the New Testament, but has been part of the liturgy from the first century onward.

(10) What been the place of the Our Father in my own prayer life? What insights have I drawn from this session that will help me to go deeper in my prayer?

Resolve

Consider all that has been revealed to you in this lesson and make a resolution to remember and apply something that you have learned. Record your resolution in the space provided.

RESPONSES

Responses

(1) Why did God create me? What is the purpose of my life? (1)

God in His immense goodness created us so that we may become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4)—in other words, sharers in God’s own eternal happiness. As many Catholics learned in their youth, “God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.” We achieve this purpose not as isolated individuals, but as part of the family of God, the Church.

(2) Why do I have a desire for God? (27)

God has written this desire on the human heart. As St. Augustine famously noted, our hearts are restless until they rest in God. For this reason, our innate desire for God beckons us to seek Him. Because we were created in God’s image, we were made to know truth and to seek the good. In God is the fullness of truth and goodness.

(3) How do I know that God exists? What are the two ways of approaching God from creation? (31-34)

We know that God exists through the use of reason, as He left His “fingerprints” on His creation, namely on (a) the physical universe, and (b) the human person, created in His image. God is the first principle, without whom nothing else would exist.

(4) What are the limitations of human reason when it comes to knowing God and His will for us? (36-38)

Reason can lead us to know with certainty that God is the origin and goal of all creation, the source of all goodness, beauty, and truth. But reason alone cannot bring about knowledge of the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who took human flesh in the person of Christ. We need revelation and divine grace to know things that exceed the capacity of unaided reason, and also to confirm the moral law that is already written on our hearts.

(5) What is the fullness of God's revelation? (73)

Jesus Christ is the mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) and fullness of God's revelation to us. As the Letter to the Hebrews says: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:1-2). In sending us His Son and giving us His Spirit, God has definitively revealed Himself to us.

(6) What is Tradition? What is the relationship between Scripture and Tradition? (80-82)

Tradition is the living transmission of the Christian faith. God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, He wills that the revelation of His Son be transmitted to the whole world through the ministry of the Church. Specifically, the Word of God is brought to the world (a) *orally*, through Tradition, such as the Church's liturgy, and (b) *in writing*, through Scripture, which contains the same proclamation of salvation. Scripture and Tradition are closely related, and together they transmit the single deposit of faith.

(7) What is the deposit of faith? (84)

The deposit of faith is the entirety of the Word of God, contained in Scripture and Tradition. It has been safeguarded and handed on from the time of the Apostles. From this sacred "deposit," the Church draws all that it proposes for belief as being revealed by God Himself. This is what was entrusted by St. Paul to St. Timothy: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20).

(8) What do I think of when I hear the word "Magisterium"? What is its relationship to the Word of God? (85-87)

The Magisterium, or teaching office of the Church—namely the Pope and the bishops in union with him—has the task of authentically interpreting the Word of God. This is a great grace and service to God's people. In fulfilling this sacred office, the Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but rather is its servant, as it safeguards and proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(9) How do I know that what Scripture says is true? (105-08)

Inspiration and inerrancy. Sacred Scripture is *inspired*, meaning that it has God as its author, notwithstanding the role of the diverse human authors. Because God is its author, Scripture *teaches without error* those truths which are necessary for our salvation. In other words, Scripture is *incarnational*, as it brings together the human and the divine. God can neither deceive nor be deceived, so Scripture's reliability ultimately rests on the credibility of God Himself.

(10) What is "faith" for a Christian? What does faith mean to me? What do I hope to gain from my study of the Catechism? (150-52)

Faith is the free assent to all that God, the source of all truth, has revealed. This assent is not merely intellectual, but is reflected in our entire being and in the way we conduct our lives. It means to believe in one God in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How this is understood and applied will vary from person to person.

Responses

(1) What are creeds? Why are they important? (185-87)

“Creed” comes from the Latin verb *credo*, which means “I believe.” A creed is a definitive summary of the Christian faith. It is also sometimes called a “profession of faith” or a “symbol of the faith.” The two most significant creeds in the history of the Church are the *Apostles’ Creed* and the *Nicene Creed*. The Apostles’ Creed is the ancient baptismal formula of the Church of Rome, and is frequently recited at the beginning of the Rosary. The Nicene Creed draws its authority from the first two Church councils (Nicaea, 325 A.D., and First Constantinople, 381 A.D.), and is recited at Sunday Mass. The creeds give us a “common language of faith.” When we profess the creed, we are uniting ourselves to the faith of the Church.

(2) How do the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed begin? What is significant about the opening line of these creeds? (199-200)

The Apostles’ Creed begins “I believe in God,” while the Nicene Creed begins “I believe in one God.” Both begin with an affirmation of faith in God. This obviously is the most fundamental truth, on which the rest of our Christian faith is built. The Nicene Creed makes explicit the belief in *one* God, which has always been a distinctive characteristic of the Judeo-Christian faith. God has revealed Himself as the one, true God, and there is no other (e.g., see Isaiah 45:22).

(3) What is the central mystery of Christian faith and life? (234)

The central mystery of Christian faith and life is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, which in turn is the source of all the other mysteries of our faith. The Trinity is a mystery in a strict sense, because we can only come to know this truth through the gift of faith (see CCC 237). The Trinity was revealed to us in the Incarnation, when the eternal Son of God assumed a human nature, and in the sending of the Holy Spirit after Christ ascended to His Father.

(4) How does the Church express her faith in the Trinity? What difference does this teaching make in my life? (253-55)

The Church professes belief in one God in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each divine person equally possesses the fullness of divinity—they are not each 1/3 God. Yet, they are truly distinct persons because of their relationship to one another. The Father eternally generates the Son. The Son eternally gives Himself back to the Father. The eternal bond of love between them is the Holy Spirit, who “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” As to the difference this teaching makes in our lives, answers will vary!

(5) What is the only attribute of God mentioned in the creeds? What does it mean? (268)

The only attribute of God mentioned in the creeds is His omnipotence: We profess belief in God, the Father *almighty*. He is “the Strong One, the Mighty One” (Psalm 24:8). And we know that “nothing is impossible for God” (see Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37). God’s power is universal, loving, and mysterious. It shines forth in His creation of the world out of nothing, and in His creation of mankind out of His love and goodness. He ultimately shows forth His power in coming to earth and saving us through His Son.

(6) Why did God create the world? (293-94)

The world was created for the glory of God, who desires to spread His goodness, truth, and beauty. Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure said that God created the world “not to increase His glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it.” The goal of creation, then, is nothing other than God’s glory and our happiness.

(7) Why does God allow bad things to happen? (324)

The fact that God permits evil, suffering, and sin is a great mystery. Yet we know that Christ vanquished the power of evil through His suffering, death, and Resurrection. Our faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit evil if He did not intend for good to come from it. After all, even from the greatest evil (the murder of the Son of God on the Cross), God brought about the greatest good (the salvation of the world). We will see in upcoming lessons how sin is a radical possibility of human freedom.

(8) Who are the angels? (328-30) Can I recall the names of any of the angels mentioned in Scripture? (If you need help, check out 335)

The angels are purely spiritual creatures. They are invisible, immortal, and personal beings endowed with intelligence and will. They ceaselessly contemplate God face-to-face and glorify Him. They serve Him and are His messengers in the accomplishment of His mission to save us. The holy angels mentioned by name in Scripture are Gabriel, Raphael, and Michael. In addition, each person has a guardian angel (see Matthew 18:10).

(9) How are we different from angels? Why does it matter? (350-51; also jump ahead and read 364-65)

Angels are spiritual beings who are not limited by time or space. They are unceasingly in God’s presence, giving Him praise and glory. Human beings are both spiritual and bodily beings. Our body and soul form but one human nature. Since we’re not angels, we have to be attentive to our bodily existence in addition to our spiritual dimension. We diminish ourselves when we despise or neglect our bodies or neglect our spiritual lives. It is also established Church teaching that every soul is created immediately and directly by God – and not “produced” by the parents. Our immortal souls will be reunited with our bodies at the end of the world.

(10) How do I understand mankind’s place in the world? What can I do this week to praise and thank God for the wonders of His creation?

Answers will vary. A fitting hymn or prayer to call to mind during the week might be “All Creatures of Our God and King.”

Responses

(1) What does it mean to be created in the image and likeness of God? (356-357)

The human person is the summit of God's creation (CCC 343), because He was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26-27). Being created in the image of God, we are uniquely able to know and love our Creator. As the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) teaches, man is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake" (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24), and we were made to be happy with God forever. As creatures fashioned in the image of God, we are *persons*. In other words, I am *someone*, not some *thing*. Lastly, Man was also created in the likeness of God, meaning that God's own spirit was breathed into Him, enabling our first parents to share in God's very life. Through the sin of our first parents, man lost his likeness to God, which as we will see is restored in us when we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism.

(2) How does the Church understand the reality of sin? (386-87)

Sin is present throughout human history. At root, sin is mankind's rejection of God. This reality comes into focus for us as we come to understand God's plan for us. This plan unfolds for us in salvation history, culminating in Jesus Christ, who came to defeat the power of sin in our lives. Sin is an abuse of human freedom. Because of this freedom, we are personally responsible for our failures to love God and neighbor.

(3) What is the "reverse side" of the Good News of Jesus Christ? (389)

The "reverse side" of the Good News of Jesus Christ is the doctrine of *original sin*. If Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, then the other side of the coin is that the world is in need of saving. By way of analogy, the "reverse side" of a cure is the illness (see Mark 2:17). Similarly the "reverse side" of a dramatic comeback in sports is a large, seemingly insurmountable deficit.

(4) How am I to read the account of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3? Why is it relevant to my life today? (390)

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses symbolic language to describe an event that took place at the beginning of human history. We have the certainty of faith that we are descended from a first set of parents, whose "original sin" has left its mark on all of human history. Genesis 3 helps us to understand our frailty and sinfulness, preparing us for a Savior.

(5) What does the Church teach concerning the devil? (391-95)

The Church teaches that Satan and the other demons were originally angels created good by God. The fall of the demons resulted from the free choice of these angelic creatures, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and His reign, leading to the existence of hell. This rebellion is reflected in the tempter's words to our first parents: "You will be like God" (Gen. 3:5), which lured them away from their loving Father. Scripture bears witness to the disastrous influence of Satan, who even tried to divert Christ Himself from His saving mission. The devil continues to seduce us to disobey God today.

(6) What was at the heart of Mankind's first sin (387-98)

When tempted by the devil, Adam and Eve allowed trust in the Father's goodness to die in their hearts, and they abused their freedom. In their disobedience they wished to become "like God," but yet apart from God and from His loving plan for them.

(7) What were the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's sin? (399-401) What were the consequences for the human family?

Adam and Eve immediately lost for themselves and for all their descendents the original grace of holiness and justice that established them as children of God. The harmony of life in the Garden of Eden was lost, and toil, suffering, and death entered the world. Because the original sin resulted in the loss of grace for the entire human family, men and women come into the world in a fallen state. For that reason, everyone needs the saving grace of Christ, which comes to us in the Sacrament of Baptism.

(8) In what ways has human nature been wounded by original sin? How does my own personal experience verify this truth? (405)

In addition to the loss of friendship with God (more technically known as the "loss of sanctifying grace"), sin has wounded -- but not destroyed -- human nature. We are subject to ignorance, suffering, and death. We struggle to know the truth and to choose what is good. We are subject to *concupiscence* (kūn Q pih sense), which is the tendency to sin that all of us will take with us to the grave.

(9) What is the *Protoevangelium*? How was the *Protoevangelium* fulfilled? (410-11)

Protoevangelium (PRO toe ee van J lee oom) means "first gospel." After the fall of Adam and Eve we read these words of God to Satan: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Here, at the outset of human history, we hear God's first promise of a Redeemer, the offspring of "the woman," who will "crush the head" of Satan. Evil will be conquered and man will be restored to friendship with God. That promise was fulfilled by Christ, Son of Mary, whom the early Church called the "new Adam," as His perfect obedience to His Father definitively reversed the disobedience of Adam.

(10) The Catechism (409) refers to mankind's spiritual battle with the forces of evil. How aware am I of this "spiritual battle" within myself and the world? What can I do this week to combat sin in my life?

Answers will vary. Some possible resolutions for the coming week:

- (a) spend time in Eucharistic adoration
- (b) daily examine my conscience and ask for God's mercy
- (c) receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- (d) offer up any sufferings, annoyances, or inconveniences for the conversion of sinners
- (e) do a kind, unnoticed deed for someone who has offended me

Responses

(1) What is the “good news” that I am invited to share with others? (422-24, 439)

The “good news” is the proclamation of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, whom St. Peter acknowledged as the “Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Christ fulfilled all the promises God had made to Abraham and His descendents. Through His life, death, and Resurrection, He brought the gift of salvation to the whole world. This truth is beautifully articulated by St. Paul:

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” --Galatians 4:4-7 (NAB)

The Greek word for “good news” is *evangelion*, from which we get the word evangelization. Through evangelization and catechesis, we help others to become followers of Christ.

(2) What is the significance of the name of Jesus? (430, 432)

The name “Jesus” means “God saves.” The archangel Gabriel tells Our Lady that the child she will conceive by the Holy Spirit will be named “Jesus” (Luke 1: 31). The name expresses His identity and mission “because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1: 21). Peter proclaimed after Pentecost that “there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved” (Acts 4:12).

(3) What is the meaning of the word “Christ”? Why is Jesus called the Christ? (436-40)

“Christ” in Greek, or “Messiah” in Hebrew, means the “anointed one.” Jesus is the Christ because he has been consecrated by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit for His mission to redeem mankind. He is Israel’s long-awaited Messiah who was sent into the world by the Father. Jesus accepted the title of Messiah, but the kingdom for which He was anointed is not of this world, but rather is the Kingdom of God. As the Messiah, He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as ransom for us (Mark 10:45). From the name Christ comes our name of *Christian*.

(4) What does it mean to call Jesus “Lord”? (446-455) How is Jesus the Lord of my life?

The title “Lord” points to divine sovereignty. When we call Jesus “Lord,” we are acknowledging His divinity. The New Testament not only uses “Lord” to refer to God the Father, but also to Jesus, who is God Himself. This truth is expressed in the earliest Christian creeds as well as in this beautiful hymn preserved by St. Paul:

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” –Philippians 2:9-11

(5) Why did the Son of God become man? (456-60)

At Mass we confess in the Nicene Creed: “For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven...” The Catechism identifies four principal reasons why God became man:

(a) to save us by reconciling us with God (see 1 John 4:10, 14)

(b) to reveal God’s love for us (see John 3:16)

(c) to be our model of holiness (see Matthew 11:29)

(d) to make us “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4)—in other words, children of God (see 1 John 3:1)

(6) What does the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) teach us about the person and natures of Christ? (467, 480-81)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is true God and true man. He is one divine person having two natures, a human nature and a divine nature. These natures remain together without confusion, change, division, or separation. The union of these two natures in the person (Greek, *hypostasis*) of Christ is known as the *hypostatic* union.

(7) What is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception? (491) How has this teaching been understood in the East? (493)

Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” (Luke 1: 28), was redeemed from the moment of her conception. Pope Pius IX proclaimed this traditional dogma of the faith in 1854: “The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”

The Eastern Fathers called Mary “the All-Holy” (*Panagia*) and celebrated her as being free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature.

(8) Why is the Blessed Virgin Mary considered the “New Eve”? (494, 511) Why should this matter to me?

Mary is the “New Eve” who freely cooperates with Jesus her Son, the New Adam, in the new creation. This new life comes forth from the Cross and is imparted to us through the Church. Eve was the “mother of all the living” (Genesis 3:20). Since Mary is the spiritual mother of all Christians (see John 19:26-27; Revelation 12:17), many Church Fathers considered Mary the “New Eve,” the mother of all who are alive in Christ. As St. Irenaeus wrote:

"The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."

In light of this, we acknowledge and venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary as our “Blessed Mother,” as her motherhood extends to all the faithful (CCC 501).

(9) What does the Church teach concerning Mary’s virginity? (499, 510)

The liturgy of the Church has traditionally celebrated Mary as the Aeiparthenos, the Ever-virgin. Mary is ever-virgin in the sense that she “remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin” (St. Augustine). Therefore, when the Gospels speak of the “brothers and sisters of Jesus,” they are talking about the close relatives of Jesus, according to the way of speaking used in Sacred Scripture (CCC 500), and not other biological offspring of Mary.

(10) How well do I know the Church’s teachings concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary? Am I sometimes confused or even embarrassed when other Christians challenge me about Our Lady’s role in the Church? How can I grow in my love for our Blessed Mother?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) How is Christ's life a mystery? (514-15)

Jesus' life is a mystery, not in the sense that we can't understand it, but because it is a sign and instrument of His divinity and of the salvation He brings. Here we see the connection between the Greek word *mysterion* and its Latin synonym *sacramentum*, from which we get the word "sacrament." His visible, earthly life points us to the invisible mystery of His divine sonship. As Our Lord says, "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14: 9). Further, His entire life is a mystery—a sign and instrument—of the redemption of mankind.

(2) What was Jesus' "hidden life"? What does it teach us? (533-34)

Jesus' hidden life refers to His childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. This part of Jesus' life is not recorded in Scripture (except for the Finding in the Temple when He was 12, recorded in Luke 2: 41-52), and thus is "hidden" from us. From this period in Jesus' life, we learn the value of obedience and fidelity to our daily responsibilities. Mary and Joseph were models of faith and trust in God.

(3) What is the significance of the Baptism of Jesus? (535-37)

Jesus' public life begins with His Baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Here Jesus is revealed as the Messiah and Son of God (see Matthew 3: 17). Jesus' Baptism also manifests His acceptance of His mission as the suffering servant, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. By His incarnation, Jesus takes on our life. Now by His Baptism, He goes further, and He identifies with sinful humanity. This prefigures our reception of the Sacrament of Baptism, where by grace we in turn identify with Christ.

(4) What do we learn from the temptations of Jesus in the desert? (538-40)

Jesus' temptations in the desert call to mind the temptation of Adam in Paradise and the temptations of Israel in the desert. Satan tempts Jesus to turn away from the mission given Him by the Father. Christ, the new Adam, conquers Satan through His obedient adherence to His Father's plan of salvation. The Church unites herself to this mystery in a special way during the liturgical season of Lent.

(5) According to CCC 546, what method did Jesus frequently use to describe the Kingdom of God? Give some examples of this methodology.

Jesus often used parables to describe His kingdom. His parables liken the kingdom to a wedding feast. The kingdom is a pearl of great price, requiring a radical choice to forsake all else in order to obtain it. One must be willing to enter the kingdom in order to become a disciple of Christ.

(6) Why did Jesus work miracles during His public ministry? (547-50) Am I open to the possibility of miracles? Have I experienced any miracles or other "signs" in my life that have drawn me to Christ?

Signs and wonders frequently accompanied Jesus' preaching. His miracles bear witness to His proclamation that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Thus they strengthen faith in the One who does His Father's works (see John 10: 31-39). Further, it was prophesied that the Messiah would work such signs (see Isaiah 29:18-19, 35:5-6, 61:1; Luke 7:19-23). While Jesus cured many people of various ailments and diseases, He did not come to rid the world of all physical evils. Rather, He came to free mankind from the greatest slavery: sin.

(7) What specific authority did Our Lord give to St. Peter? (553) Why is that important to Christians today?

In Matthew 16: 19, Our Lord says to St. Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." The keys represent the authority to govern the People of God, which Our Lord confirmed after His Resurrection when He instructed Peter to "feed my sheep" (John 21: 15-17).

This event is significant to us, because the authority given to the apostles has been passed on in an unbroken line through the bishops, who are the successors of the apostles. The head of the apostles, St. Peter, possessed special authority even among the apostles, as the one who was given the "keys." His authority continues to this day through his successor, the Pope.

(8) What happened at the Transfiguration? (554) What is the meaning of this event for us? (555-56)

On a high mountain, while in the company of the apostles Peter, James, and John, Jesus' appearance became dazzlingly white, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking of His "departure," (or new "exodus") that He will accomplish in Jerusalem.

The Transfiguration reveals the Trinity: "the Father in the voice, the Son in the man Jesus, the Spirit in the shining cloud" (St. Thomas Aquinas). Jesus further reveals that His glory comes by way of the Cross, and He anticipates His resurrection and His glorious coming, "which will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3: 21).

(9) As Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem, the crowd shouted "Hosanna." What does "Hosanna" mean? (559) When do we say "Hosanna" during the Mass? What is happening in this scene from Jesus' life? (570)

"Hosanna" means "save us" or "give us salvation." At the established time, Jesus chose to go up to Jerusalem to suffer His passion and death, and to rise from the dead. As the Messiah-King who reveals the coming of the Kingdom, He triumphantly entered Jerusalem mounted on a donkey. He was acclaimed by the little children whose shout of joyful praise is taken up in the "Sanctus" during the Liturgy of the Eucharist: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna (save us!)" (Matthew 21: 9). The liturgy of the Church opens Holy Week (i.e., Passion/Palm Sunday) by celebrating this entry into Jerusalem.

(10) What mystery from the life of Christ that we studied in this session is most meaningful to me at this time in my life? Why? Can I set aside some time this week to prayerfully reflect upon the mysteries of Christ's life?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) Jesus was condemned for His perceived (a) failure to submit to the Mosaic Law; (b) hostility to the Temple; and (c) denial of faith in one God. Were these accusations justified? (592-94) Why or why not?

No. Jesus did not come to abolish the Mosaic Law, but to fulfill it and give it its definitive interpretation. Jesus venerated the Temple from His youth as the house of his Father (Luke 2:49; John 2:16). However, He also foretold its destruction in the context of His own imminent death. His risen body would become the definitive “Temple” or dwelling place of God among men. Jesus never denied the fundamental belief of Israel in one God. However, His call to belief in Him, and even more specifically His revealing Himself as equal to God and capable of forgiving sins, was a stumbling block to some. They did not interpret this as God becoming man, but rather as man attempting to pass himself off as God—the serious sin of blasphemy.

(2) Are all Jews responsible for putting Jesus to death? (597) Why or why not? What is my own responsibility for Jesus’ death? (598)

Vatican II’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) provides:

“What happened in [Jesus’] passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today, although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures” (no. 4).

Rather, every single sinner, that is, every human being, is really the cause and the instrument of the sufferings of the Redeemer. In this regard, the greatest blame falls upon those Christians who more often fall into sin or delight in their vices.

(3) How does the Church understand the connection between the Last Supper and Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross? (610-11)

At the Last Supper with His apostles on the eve of His Passion, Jesus anticipated the free offering of His life on Calvary. More specifically, the Last Supper not only symbolized His complete self-offering, but also made it really present: “This is my Body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19); “This is my Blood which is poured out . . .” (Matthew 26: 28). At that moment, Christ instituted the Eucharist as the “memorial” (1 Corinthians 11: 25) of His sacrifice and established His apostles and their successors as priests of the new covenant.

(4) What is the so-called “Agony in the Garden”? What is its significance in the saving work of Christ? (612)

The Agony in the Garden, the first sorrowful mystery of the Rosary, refers to the mental and physical anguish Our Lord experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane between the Last Supper and His arrest (Luke 22: 39-46). In His prayer, Christ expressed the horror that suffering and death represents for the human family when He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me . . .” (Matthew 26:39). Yet, obedient to His Father’s will, Christ accepted His death as the means of redemption for the entire human race.

(5) How are we called to participate in Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross? (618) What does this mean in practical terms?

While Christ’s death on the Cross is the one, definitive sacrifice that reconciles God and man, Our Lord desired to associate us with His redeeming sacrifice. St. Paul went so far as to say we make up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ (Colossians 1: 24). That passage is not to be understood as diminishing the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice, but rather to show forth the role of the Church—and indeed every Christian man, woman, and child—to extend Christ’s saving work through time and space. For that reason, Jesus instructs us to take up our own cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9: 23). This means “offering up” in union with Christ all our prayers, actions, joys, and sufferings as a pleasing sacrifice to the Father.

(6) What is the place of the Resurrection in the Christian faith? (638) How is the Resurrection both a historical and transcendent event? (647)

The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on the third day after His death on the Cross is the crowning, distinctive truth of the apostolic faith, witnessed through Scripture and Tradition, and proclaimed from age to age by the Church. As St. Paul pointedly notes, if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is in vain, and we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17).

The Resurrection was a historical event, evidenced by the empty tomb and Christ’s many appearances prior to His Ascension into heaven. It is also a transcendent event, in that the Resurrection is a mystery of the faith that surpasses human understanding.

(7) What are the two aspects of the Paschal mystery? How do they relate to the grace of justification received at Baptism? (654)

The two aspects of the Paschal mystery are

(a) by His suffering and death, Christ liberated us from sin; and

(b) by His Resurrection and Ascension into glory, Christ opened the way to eternal life.

“Justification” is our entering into right relationship with God as His beloved sons and daughters in Christ. This consists in both our own liberation from sin as well as our participation in a new life of grace.

(8) When did Our Lord ascend into heaven? (659) What is the significance of this event for us? (666-67)

Jesus appeared to His followers several times after His Resurrection, teaching them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15: 5-7), and then forty days after His Resurrection, He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9). Christ's glorious Ascension into heaven enables us to live in the hope of one day joining Him for all eternity. In addition, from His seat at the right hand of the Father, Christ constantly intercedes for us as our high priest (Romans 8: 34; Hebrews 7: 25) and, as we will discuss more fully in the next session, He sends us His Holy Spirit.

(9) Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God. How does He reign now? (668-74) How is He the King of my own heart?

As the Lord of history and the Head of His Church, the glorified Christ mysteriously remains on earth where His kingdom is already present in seed and in its beginning in the Church. One day He will return in glory but we do not know the time. For this reason, as the priest says after the Our Father at Mass, " we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." (see also Revelation 22: 20). Where the King is, there is His kingdom, and Our Lord is present in His Church in various ways, most especially in the Eucharist. Our Lord has also said that the kingdom of God is within our hearts (see Luke 17: 21), where we struggle to give Him our allegiance and love. Answers will vary as to how we recognize and honor His presence within us.

(10) What resolution can I make for this coming week to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ?

Answers will vary. Some recommended resolutions for the coming week include:

- meditating each day on one of the four Gospels
- spending time with Jesus, at daily Mass if possible, or visiting Him in the Blessed Sacrament
- reflecting each day on one or more paragraphs from this section of the Catechism
- reading books that help me grow in knowledge of the faith as well as in my prayer life
- persevering in this course!

Responses

(1) What are some of the common symbols of the Holy Spirit? (694-701) Which ones are most meaningful to me? Why?

There are many symbols of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Catechism, including:

Living water which springs from the wounded Heart of Christ and which quenches the thirst of the baptized;

Anointing with oil, which is the sacramental sign of Confirmation;

Fire, which transforms what it touches;

The *cloud*, in which the divine glory is glimpsed;

The *imposition of hands*, by which the Holy Spirit is imparted;

The *finger of God* that casts out demons; and

The *dove* that descended on Christ at His Baptism and remained with Him.

(2) How is God's Spirit at work in creation? (703-04) In the Blessed Virgin Mary? (721-22, 744) At Pentecost? (731-32)

The Spirit of God was involved in the creation of the world. He is described as a wind that hovered over the waters (Genesis 1: 2). He was also given to our first parents as the "breath of life," such that man was created in the likeness of God (Genesis 2:7).

The Holy Spirit fulfilled in Mary all the waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ. He filled her with grace and made her virginity fruitful so that she could give birth to the Son of God made flesh.

Finally, before the day of Pentecost, we see the apostles persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14). Here we are touching upon a very important parallel between the moment when Jesus came into the world and the moment when His Mystical Body, the Church, is manifested on the day of Pentecost. Just as Mary cooperated with the Holy Spirit so that Jesus would be conceived in her womb, so too on the day of Pentecost, Mary cooperated by her prayers with the Holy Spirit that the life of Jesus would be conceived in the souls of the disciples, thus forming Christ's Mystical Body: the Church.

(3) What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church? How do I understand the working of the Holy Spirit in my life? (737-41, 747)

The Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. He builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. In other words, He is the soul of the Church. Without the Holy Spirit, the visible Church would be an empty shell or corpse.

As the Spirit of Love, the Holy Spirit restores the divine likeness that was lost through sin, thus allowing the baptized to partake in divine life (see 2 Peter 1: 4). He sends us forth to bear witness to Christ in word and action, so as to bear the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5: 22-23). The Holy Spirit is also the Master of prayer.

(4) What is the mission of the Church? (767-69)

As recent popes have emphasized, the Church exists to evangelize, to proclaim and establish the kingdom of God throughout the entire world (see Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15), uniting all men and women to God through Christ. The Church on earth is but the seed of the kingdom that will reach its perfection in the glory of heaven.

(5) Is the Church visible or spiritual? (770-71) In what sense is the Church a mystery? (779)

The Church is a visible reality. It is a human institution that exists in history. At the same time, the Church is an invisible, spiritual reality that transcends time. In this latter sense the Church is sometimes called the "Mystical Body of Christ." While the visible reality may be seen by all, the spiritual reality requires the lens of faith.

The Church is incarnational, meaning that the divine and human have come together. Another example of this would be Scripture, in which the various books of the Bible have God *and* men as their author. This coming together of the human and divine is a mystery.

Lastly, another way of translating the Greek word for mystery is "sacrament." The Church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument of our salvation in Christ.

(6) Why is the Church called the People of God? (781-82)

The "People of God" was a title of the Church especially favored by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). This title brings out the fact that we are saved not as isolated individuals, but as a people, as the family of God. Just as it pleased God to gather the tribes of Israel as His chosen family, the Church constitutes the New Israel, through which we are gathered together by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(7) In what ways does the Church participate in Christ's threefold office of priest, prophet, and king? (783-86) What can I do to participate more fully in the life of the Church? (see also 941-43)

We participate in Christ's *priestly* office through our Baptism, at which time we are consecrated by the Holy Spirit to offer spiritual sacrifices in union with Christ (see Romans 12:1). We are encouraged to offer our "prayers, works, joys, and sufferings" as a pleasing offering to the Father, in and through Christ.

We participate in His *prophetic* office when we grow in our understanding of the faith and share it with others.

Finally, we participate in Christ's royal or *kingly* office through conquering sin in our lives. We also participate through our loving service directed to God and neighbor in imitation of Christ, who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 45).

(8) What are the four marks of the Church? (811) In your own words, describe each in a sentence or two. (813, 823-24, 830-31, 857)

The Church is **one**, despite the diversity of her members. This oneness or unity reflects the Trinity and is the special gift that Christ the Bridegroom (cf. Mark 2:19) bestows upon His beloved Bride, the Church (cf. Ephesians 5: 21-32). Christ founded but one Church, built on the rock of St. Peter (Matthew 16:18). Through His Church, Christ seeks to unite all people, who have been scattered because of sin. As St. Paul writes:

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4: 4-5).

The Church is **holy** because Christ has chosen her as His Bride. He has purified her and sanctified her through His blood (Ephesians 5: 26). But the Church is not only Bride, but also Mother. As our Mother, the Church, animated by the Holy Spirit, is a means of holiness for the whole world, as she possesses the fullness of the means of salvation. Despite our sinfulness, the Church is always there to embrace us and lead us to God.

The Church is **catholic**, or universal, because she has the mission of proclaiming Christ to the entire human family (cf. Matthew 28:19). The Church is also catholic in the sense that Christ is present in His Church—that the fullness of faith, sacramental life, etc. may be found in the Church. As St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote at the beginning of the second century, "Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church."

The Church is **apostolic** for three reasons:

(1) *origin*: She was built on the foundation of the apostles (Ephesians 2: 20).

(2) *teaching*: She preserves and proclaims the deposit of faith received from the apostles.

(3) *structure*: She continues to be guided by the apostles through their legitimate successors, the bishops, assisted by priests and always in communion with the Pope.

(9) How does the Catechism describe the mission of the Pope and bishops? (880-82, 938-39)

The Pope is the successor of Saint Peter and the visible source and foundation of the unity of the Church. He is the vicar, or representative, of Christ on earth. He is the pastor of the universal Church, over which he has God-given authority.

Bishops are authentic witnesses and teachers of the apostolic faith, and in union with the Holy Father they have the duty of proclaiming the Gospel to the world as teachers, sanctifiers, and shepherds.

(10) Read CCC 898-90, on the vocation of lay people. How would I describe my own Christian vocation? What can I do this week to seek and make known the kingdom of God in my own corner of the world?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) Who belongs to the “communion of saints”? (962) What is the significance of this teaching to me?

The communion of saints refers to the spiritual bonds that unite all the saints, or holy ones (*sancti*) to Christ and through Him to one another. This “community” includes:

- The saints in heaven, who have already entered into the eternal glory of God and who help us by their prayers;
- Those who are undergoing purification in Purgatory, who are helped by our prayers; and
- The pilgrim Church on earth; that is, all Christian men and women who are striving toward their heavenly prize (Philippians 3:13-14), who have been reborn at Baptism.

An older expression of these three groups would be:

- Church Triumphant (heaven)
- Church Suffering (purgatory)
- Church Militant (earth)

Together, we form one family in Christ (CCC 959).

One possible significance would be that it shows that Christianity isn’t simply a “me and Jesus” thing, but rather God has chosen to save us as a people, a family, through the ministry of His Church, making all believers brothers and sisters in Christ.

(2) How is Mary the “Mother of the Church”? (963-64)

Mary is the mother of Christ, the “head” of the “Body,” and as the “New Eve” she is the spiritual mother of all Christians, who are the “members” of the Body of Christ. Mary’s maternal role in the Christ goes hand in hand with her maternal role in the Church.

The Church has always understood Christ’s words at the Cross, “Behold your mother!” (John 19: 27) as applying not only to St. John, but to all the faithful in every age—in other words, to the Church! Mary’s role in the life and mission of Christ as well as in the life of the Church was discussed in depth at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). At that time, after carefully considering the Church’s constant teaching and devotion, Pope Paul VI formally accorded Mary this title.

(3) What kind of devotion is directed to the Blessed Virgin Mary? (971) How does devotion to Mary bring me closer to Jesus?

From the earliest times, Christians have revered Mary as the Mother of God and our own spiritual mother. This special devotion is essentially different from the adoration and praise that is given to God alone.

Instead, our devotion to Mary expresses itself in our seeking her maternal intercession and support. This devotion is expressed in major liturgical celebrations as well as private prayers and devotions—especially the Rosary, in which we meditate on the life of Christ while sitting in the company of our Blessed Mother. As we honor Mary in this way, we participate in the fulfillment of this biblical prophecy: “All generations will call [Mary] blessed” (Luke 1: 48).

(4) We profess in the Creed our belief in the “forgiveness of sins.” What does this article of the Creed mean to me? What sacraments are the ordinary means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins (984-86)?

The Apostles’ Creed associates our belief in the forgiveness of sins not only with faith in the Holy Spirit, but also with our faith in the Church (CCC 976). Christ emphasized in His ministry that He had the authority on earth to forgive sins (Luke 5: 24). He entrusted this mission and authority (the “power of the keys”) to His Church to forgive sins in His name (CCC 981). As Our Lord said on the evening of His Resurrection:

"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

The principal sacraments for the forgiveness of sins are Baptism and Reconciliation, which we will discuss in more detail in future lessons.

(5) What happens to our body and soul when we die? (1016)

Death is the separation of the soul from the body. The body decays while the soul, which is immortal, goes to meet the judgment of God and awaits its reunion with the body at the end of time. Death marks the end of earthly life. Death is a consequence of sin, yet it has been definitively transformed by Christ into the doorway leading to eternal life with Him.

(6) What exactly is the resurrection of the body? (997) When will this take place? (1001)

The ultimate condition of man will not involve the separation of his body from his soul. As noted in the previous question, death involves for a time the separation of soul from the body. At the end of the world, however, when Christ comes again in glory, our bodies will rise and be joined once again to our immortal souls. This reality exceeds our imagination and understanding, though we do receive a foretaste of the blessed reality in the Eucharist (CCC 1000). This new life is eternal and incorruptible.

(7) The Catechism refers to heaven as “the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longing, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (1024). How would I describe heaven in my own words? How is heaven described in Scripture? (1027)

Scripture uses images such as life, peace, wedding banquet, wine of the kingdom, the Father’s house, the heavenly Jerusalem, and paradise (CCC 1027). Yet, these images can only take us so far. As St. Paul affirms: “No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2: 9).

(8) What is purgatory? (1030-32)

Purgatory is the state of those who die in God’s friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still need to undergo a period of purification before entering into the happiness of heaven. This purification is sometimes called a cleansing fire (see 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 1 Peter 1:7). Because of the communion of saints, the faithful on earth are able to help the holy souls in purgatory by offering prayers for them, especially the Mass. They also help them by almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance.

(9) What does “Amen” mean? Why does the Creed end with the word “Amen”? (1061-65)

Amen is a Hebrew word that expresses agreement with what has been said. It is frequently said at the conclusion of prayers to express our complete, personal “yes” to the words we have just spoken. “Amen” is closely associated with “belief,” and so the Creed fittingly concludes with our own individual “Amen” to this summary of the faith of the Church. Our Amen reflects God’s trustworthiness and authority as well as our personal commitment to Him.

Christ Himself is the “Amen” (Revelation 3:14). He takes our “Amen” to the Father, as the priest says at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer:

Through him, and with him, and in him
O God, almighty Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
all glory and honor is yours
for ever and ever.
AMEN.

(10) We have now covered the entire section of the Catechism on the Creed. What aspect of the Creed causes me the most difficulty? What can I do this week to grow in my faith?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What is the Paschal mystery? How is the Paschal mystery related to the sacraments of the Church? (1067)

The Paschal mystery is the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord, through which He redeemed the world. The Paschal mystery is not merely recalled in the Church's liturgy, but rather it is celebrated and made present, such that we are able to experience its saving effects through the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist. Christ saved the world 2,000 years ago, but through the sacraments of the Church Christ's saving work is applied to *us*.

(2) How does the Catechism define the liturgy? (1069) How would I describe the liturgy in my own words?

Liturgy literally means “work of the people.” It is the public worship of the Church, including the Mass and the celebration of the sacraments. At its heart, liturgy is the celebration of the mystery of Christ, particularly His Paschal mystery. Through the liturgy, Christ continues His redeeming work—in, with, and through His Church—as our eternal high priest.

(3) What necessarily precedes the liturgy? What fruits are to be expected from the liturgy? (1072)

While the liturgy is the source and summit of the Church's activity, it doesn't exhaust the Church's activity. Before one can come to the liturgy, for example, one must be evangelized—in other words, called to faith and conversion. Similarly, one's participation in the liturgy does not exhaust the Church's activity. We hear at the end of Mass “*Go in peace.*” We are sent forth to live holy lives and do our part in the building up of the Church. See generally, Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 9.

(4) What is the work of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity in the liturgy? (1110-12)

In the liturgy, God the Father is praised and adored as the source of all blessings (see Ephesians 1:3-6). At the same time, through the liturgy the Father continues to abundantly bless us, His beloved sons and daughters in Christ.

Christ's work in the liturgy is sacramental, in that it is His Paschal mystery that is made present and effective in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through His mystical body the Church, people of all times and places have access to Christ and His saving grace.

The Holy Spirit prepares us to encounter Christ in the sacred liturgy. He makes the saving work of Christ present and effective in the gathered assembly of the faithful. He unites the Church around Christ, the life-giving vine (see John 15:5), so that as Christ's body we will bear much fruit.

(5) What is a sacrament? How are sacraments *efficacious* signs? (1127-28, 1131)

Sacraments are outward signs of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church by which we encounter Him and His saving work here and now, as His divine life is poured into our souls.

The sacramental signs are efficacious. This means that the signs not only signify God's action but actually bring it about. For example, as we will see in more detail when we study the Catechism's treatment of Baptism, the baptismal water not only signifies cleansing, death, and new life, but by the power of the Holy Spirit actually brings about a spiritual cleansing by which we die with Christ and rise to new life in Him. The sacraments act *ex opere operato*, which simply means that Christ Himself acts in the sacraments and guarantees their efficacy—notwithstanding the sins or failings of the minister or recipient. Even so, while Christ upholds His part of the bargain, we are called to be as well disposed as possible, so that the grace of the sacraments find “good soil” in which to take root (see Luke 8: 4-8).

(6) Who celebrates the heavenly liturgy? (1137) Who celebrates the liturgy on earth? (1140-42) Can I recall a celebration of the liturgy in which I felt especially close to God and the angels and saints?

The heavenly liturgy is celebrated by the company of angels and saints, including the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, the apostles, martyrs, and a “great multitude” (Revelation 7: 9). All the faithful celebrate the liturgy on earth, as the liturgy is not a private celebration but the work of the whole Church. However, some may have different functions in the liturgical celebration. And in particular, as we will discuss in more detail in our treatment of the Catechism's teaching on Holy Orders, the ordained minister has the unique role of acting *in persona Christi*, as an “icon” of Christ, for the building up of the faith community.

(7) What is the significance of sacramental signs and symbols? (1189)

As the Catechism points out, liturgical celebrations involve signs and symbols relating to creation (e.g., fire, water), human life (e.g., washing, breaking bread), and salvation history (e.g., Passover rites). These elements are incorporated into the Church's liturgy and by the power of the Holy Spirit they are the means through which Christ's saving and sanctifying action are communicated to us.

(8) What is the center of the liturgical season? (1166-67) What can I do to make the celebration of the Lord's Day more fully the “center” of my week?

The center of the liturgical season is Sunday, the Lord's Day. While the high point of the liturgical year is the celebration of Easter, the “feast of feasts,” each Sunday is a little Easter, as it was on Easter Sunday that Our Lord rose from the dead. Accordingly, the Lord's Day is the foundation of the entire liturgical year and the pre-eminent day for the liturgical assembly.

Answers will vary as to how to celebrate the Lord's Day. Clearly one should make Sunday Mass the high point of the week, and also make sure that it is a day of rest and re-creation (see CCC 2192-95).

(9) What is the significance of church buildings? (1180-81) What are some of its principal furnishings? (1182-84)

A church building is a *domus Dei*, a house of God. It symbolizes the Church as well as the heavenly Jerusalem. It should be a sacred, set apart place, dedicated to divine worship. Some of the more significant interior components include the tabernacle, where the Eucharist is reserved; the altar; the place where the holy oils are kept; the chair of the bishop or priest; the ambo, from which the Word of God is proclaimed; the baptismal font; and confessionals. Sacred images should abound as well, with the overall effect of lifting one's mind and heart to God.

(10) The Church calls the laity to a full, conscious, and active participation in the sacred liturgy. What practical things can I do this week (and beyond!) to more fully, consciously, and actively participate in the liturgy, especially Sunday Mass?

Answers will vary. Some suggestions:

- Maintaining silence in church before and after Mass (visit in the vestibule or parking lot!)
- Make Sunday Mass the most important "appointment" of the week, not something to "squeeze in" between soccer and shopping!
- Stay for the duration—get there on time and stay for the end!
- Be attentive to what's happening at Mass; one help is to read and meditate upon the readings prior to Mass.
- Make a list of prayer intentions to remember at Mass.
- Extend one's participation in the liturgy, such as by:
attending daily Mass if/when one's schedule allows
pray the liturgy of the hours (CCC 1174-78)
sign up for Eucharistic adoration!
develop one's personal prayer and private devotions, such as the Rosary

Responses

(1) Give some examples of how the Sacrament of Baptism is prefigured in the Old Testament. (1217-22) What does water signify in these examples?

Examples would include the creation of the world, when the Spirit hovered over the waters (Genesis 1: 2); Noah and the great flood, as Noah's family was saved through water (see 1 Peter 3: 20); liberation from slavery in Egypt by passing through the waters of the Red Sea; and Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan River.

Water is both a symbol of death as well as new life. In Baptism we die with Him but also rise with Him to new life (see Romans 6: 3-4). Water is also a symbol of purification or washing, and in Baptism we are made pure through the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5).

(2) What was the significance of Christ's Baptism? (1223-25) When did the Church take up the practice of baptizing those who wished to become followers of Christ? (1226)

By taking on flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Christ became one like us in all things but sin. In His Baptism, ever obedient to His Father's plan, he identified with sinful humanity, taking on the entire burden of our sins. While at His Baptism He identified with us, through our Baptism we identify with Him, as His brothers and sisters.

Shortly before His Ascension into heaven, Christ Himself commissioned the Church to go forth and baptize (see Matthew 28: 8 -10). Accordingly, from the day of Pentecost, the Church has continuously called all people to Baptism for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2: 38).

(3) What is the essential rite of Baptism? (1239-40) What part of the ceremony is most meaningful to me?

This sacrament of initiation consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water over his or her head while invoking the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Catechism (nos. 1234-45) identifies some of the more significant elements of the rite, including the sign of the cross, proclamation of the Word, exorcisms, consecration of baptismal water, anointing with chrism, white garment, the Our Father (the prayer of the children of God), and the concluding blessings.

(4) Is Baptism necessary for salvation? (1257)

All salvation comes through Christ alone (Acts 4:12), and He taught that we must be baptized in order to attain eternal life (Jn. 3: 5). In addition, His final instruction, or "commission," to His Apostles was that they make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).

Based on Christ's explicit teaching, the Church has always stressed the need to be reborn as a child of God through Baptism in order to participate in His victory over sin and death.

The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal life. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the opportunity to request the sacrament.

Yet, while God has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism, He Himself is not bound by His sacraments. God can still bring about the salvation of the unbaptized who are faithful to the lights they have been given. As St. Peter said, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10: 34-35).

(5) What are some of the effects of Baptism? (1279-80)

Through Baptism, all sins are forgiven. It takes away original sin, any personal sins, and any temporal punishment due to sin. Baptism also gives us a new life of grace through the merits of Jesus Christ. We become God's children by adoption, "new creations," partakers of the divine nature, and temples of the Holy Spirit.

We receive sanctifying grace, also known as the grace of justification, which empowers us to live this new life. With this grace we receive the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the moral virtues, especially the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Baptism unites us with one another as well as with God. We become members of the Body of Christ and are incorporated into the Church, the family of God.

And finally, Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible mark that identifies us as forever belonging to Christ (for more detail, see CCC 1262-74).

(6) What are the names that have been given to the Sacrament of Confirmation? What is the significance of these names? (1289)

The sacrament is called Chrismation in the Eastern Churches, because the essential rite of the sacrament is anointing with holy oil, known as *chrism*. The sacrament is called Confirmation in the West, because this post-baptismal anointing *confirms* and strengthens baptismal grace.

(7) How is the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred? (1300)

The basic rite of Confirmation is the anointing with sacred chrism, which is done by the laying on of the hand of the minister who says the sacramental words proper to the rite. In the West, the anointing is done on the forehead of the baptized with the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." In the Eastern Churches of the Byzantine rite, this anointing is also done on other parts of the body with the words, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(8) What are the effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation? (1302-05)

Confirmation involves a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like that of Pentecost. It impresses an indelible spiritual mark, or character, on the soul. This outpouring increases and deepens the grace of Baptism in several important ways:

1. It roots us more deeply as children of God (see Romans 8:15);
2. It unites us more firmly to Christ;
3. It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
4. It strengthens our relationship with the Church; and
5. It empowers us to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to bear witness to Christ boldly, and to never be ashamed of the Cross.

(9) What should the preparation for Confirmation entail? (1308-10) Have I helped with RCIA or perhaps served as a sponsor? Who was *mysponsor*? What role has that person played in my spiritual journey?

Only those who have been baptized can and should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The sacrament may be received only once. The sacrament presupposes a period of formation or "suitable instruction" (Code of Canon [Church] Law, canon 889), as well as the ability to renew one's baptismal promises to reject Satan and to hold firm in the Christian faith.

The preparation for the sacrament should be ordered to a more intimate union with Christ, to a greater awareness of the action of the Holy Spirit, and to a greater sense of belonging to the Church.

Lastly, the sacrament presupposes the proper disposition. Candidates for Confirmation should be in a state of grace and are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a proximate means of preparation. Also, a period of intense prayer in the days leading up to the Confirmation is recommended, in keeping with the time spent in prayer by the disciples prior to the first Pentecost (see Acts 1:14).

(10) Baptism and Confirmation are "sacraments of initiation." Baptism is the door to the Christian life, while Confirmation strengthens the grace given at Baptism. What role has these sacraments played in my life? How do I live out my Baptism and Confirmation? What can I do to help lead others to the Church through the "door" of Baptism and Confirmation?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What is the role of the Eucharist in the life of the Church? (1324) What has been the role of the Eucharist in my life?

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. It is the high point of God's saving work in our lives and also of our worship of Him. It contains the whole spiritual good of the Church, Christ Himself, the Lamb of God. The Eucharist signifies and brings about our communion with divine life and the unity of the People of God. Through the Mass, we are united with the liturgy of heaven and enjoy a foretaste of eternal life.

(2) Eucharist comes from the Greek word for "thanksgiving." What are some of the other names of this sacrament? (1328-32) Which name appeals most to me?

Some of the other names for the Eucharist include:

- *Lord's Supper*: This title refers to the Last Supper (see 1 Corinthians 11: 20) and also anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb (see Revelation 19:9).
- *Breaking of Bread*: The Eucharist takes place in the context of a meal, which beckons us to recognize Christ in our midst (see Luke 24:35).
- *Memorial* of the Lord's Passion and Resurrection. In other words, it calls to mind and makes Christ's saving work present and effective in our lives.
- *Sacrifice* (or holy sacrifice of the Mass): We participate in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice.
- *Holy Communion*: The Eucharist unites us to Christ and to His Church (see 1 Corinthians 10:16 -17)
- *Mass*: From the Latin *missa* (sent) and *missio* (mission), as we are sent forth to love and serve the Lord upon being spiritually nourished by the Eucharist.

Other titles include *Eucharistic assembly*, *Holy and Divine Liturgy*, and *Most Blessed Sacrament*. All these titles bring out important aspects of the Eucharist.

(3) In the context of what Jewish feast did Jesus institute the Eucharist? Why is that important? (1339-40)

The Eucharist was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in a special way in the annual celebration of the Passover meal, in which the Jews would eat unleavened bread to commemorate their liberation from Egypt. Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper in the context of a Passover meal. Jesus is the Lamb of the new and definitive Passover, as He leads us in our own exodus from the slavery of sin to our eternal homeland.

(4) What was the principal day that the early Christians gathered to celebrate the Eucharist? (1342-43)
How does it strengthen my faith to know that from the beginning Christians have gathered for this purpose?

The early Christians gathered "on the first day of the week." In another words, they gathered principally on Sunday (the "Lord's Day"), the day of Our Lord's Resurrection, to "break bread" (Act. 20: 7). From that time, there has been a remarkable continuity in the Church's practice, such that the Mass we now attend on Sundays has the same fundamental structure of the Mass celebrated in every age, as the Church has been faithful to the call to "do this in memory of [Christ]" (Luke 22: 20).

(5) What are the main parts of the Eucharistic prayer at Mass? (1352-54)

The Mass is generally divided into two essential parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Eucharist has three parts: the presentation of the gifts (often called the Offertory), the Eucharistic prayer, and the Communion Rite. This question deals specifically with the Eucharistic prayer, which is sometimes called the anaphora. The main parts of the Eucharistic prayer are:

- *Preface*: culminating in the people proclaiming "Holy, holy, holy . . ."
- *Epiclesis*: calling down the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine.
- *Institution narrative (or consecration)*: through the words of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, Our Lord becomes present under the appearance of bread and wine.
- *Anamnesis*: calling to mind the Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ as we await His glorious return.
- *Intercessions*: praying in communion with the whole Church
- *Final doxology*: concluding prayer of praise to the Father in union with Christ: Through him, and with him, and in him..." to which the faithful respond "Amen."

(6) In what sense is the Eucharist a sacrifice? (1366-67) How would you explain this to others?

The Eucharist is a sacrifice because it makes present Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. It is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice as it not only recalls His saving work but also makes it present so that the faithful can receive its benefits.

The sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharistic sacrifice are the same sacrifice. The only difference is the manner of offering, as Christ died once for all, so the sacrifice is re-presented at Mass in an unbloody manner. We unite our own prayers and sacrifices with Christ's sacrifice (see Romans 12:1; Colossians 1:24).

And lastly, as a sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for sins and to obtain spiritual and temporal benefits (CCC 1414).

(7) What do we mean by "real presence"? How do I express my faith in the real presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine? (1373-74)

Jesus Christ is present to us in many ways, including in our community, in His Word, in the poor and needy, and in the person of the ordained minister. Yet He is present in the Eucharist in a unique and incomparable way. He is present Body, Blood, soul, and divinity.

This occurs through what is known as *transubstantiation*, in which the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ, even though the physical properties of bread and wine remain. Therefore, under the appearance of bread and wine, Jesus Christ is really and substantially present to us in the Eucharist.

(8) How often should the faithful receive Holy Communion? What should I do to prepare myself for this encounter? (1385-89)

The Church requires the faithful to participate at Mass every Sunday and on holy days of obligation. The faithful are warmly encouraged to participate at Mass on other days, too--perhaps even daily.

The Church recommends that we receive Holy Communion whenever we participate at Holy Mass. At the absolute minimum, however, we are to receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the Easter season.

It should be noted that one should be properly disposed for receiving Holy Communion. In that regard, one must be a member of the Catholic Church and be in the state of grace. In other words, one must be aware of any unconfessed mortal sins. Anyone who is conscious of having committed a grave sin must first receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before going to Communion.

In addition, those receiving Communion should do so in a spirit of recollection and prayer. They must observe the fast prescribed by the Church (no food or drink, other than water, for one hour prior to Communion), and exhibit appropriate demeanor (e.g., gestures and dress) as a sign of reverence and respect for Christ.

(9) What are some of the fruits of Holy Communion? (1416)

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides this summary:

“Holy Communion increases our union with Christ and with his Church. It preserves and renews the life of grace received at Baptism and Confirmation and makes us grow in love for our neighbor. It strengthens us in charity, wipes away venial sins and preserves us from mortal sin in the future” (no. 292). The Catechism itself also stresses that Eucharist in a particular way commits us to the poor (1397).

(10) What can I do in the coming week to grow in my appreciation of and love for our Eucharistic Lord?

Answers will vary. Some possible resolutions include:

- Put more thought into preparation for Mass—even clothing, demeanor, etc., as well as making it a priority to be there on time and spend a few minutes in prayer after Mass.
- Another great way to prepare for Mass is to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation often. How about this week?
- Visit Our Lord during the week. Many churches now have Eucharistic adoration chapels for this purpose. Or at least visit the tabernacle, where Jesus is truly present.
- Consider going to a weekday Mass, perhaps on one’s day off.
- Meditate on the life of Christ, perhaps making use of the Gospels themselves or other sound spiritual reading.
- Reflect further on the Catechism’s rich summary of the Church’s belief concerning the Eucharist!

Responses

(1) What are some of the names for the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1423-24) What do the names teach us about the sacrament? What do I usually call the sacrament?

The three most common names for the sacrament are:

- *Sacrament of Penance*, because of the interior penance and conversion involved in seeking out the sacrament;
- *Sacrament of Confession*, because the confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of the sacrament; and
- *Sacrament of Reconciliation*, because the sacrament reconciles us to God and to the Church.

The Catechism also refers to it as the Sacrament of Conversion, and the Sacrament of Forgiveness, as conversion and forgiveness are obvious key elements of the sacrament as well.

(2) What does the Catechism mean by “second conversion”? (1428) How does St. Ambrose explain it? (1429)

The Catechism is referring to the Christian’s ongoing need for conversion. Baptism is the original sacrament of conversion. The forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism requires a “second” conversion. Moved by grace, we turn back to Christ, who is rich in mercy, and we reconcile with the Church, which welcomes sinners. St. Ambrose explained it this way: **“There are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance.”**

(3) What is “interior penance”? (1430) What are the three main ways that Christians express their interior penance? (1434)

Interior penance is the movement of a contrite heart (see Psalm 51:17). It entails true repentance of our sins and the firm resolve to avoid those sins in the future. It is response to Christ’s invitation to turn away from sin and return to Him. While interior penance may be expressed in many ways, the three principal forms are *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving*.

(4) When did Christ institute the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1485) What authority did Christ give to His apostles? (1443-45)

Christ instituted this sacrament on the evening of His Resurrection when He showed Himself to his apostles and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:22-23). He gave them authority not only to forgive sins, but also the "binding and loosing" (see Matthew 16:19; 18:18; 28:16-20) authority to reconcile sinners to the Church community, as reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.

(5) What are the two essential elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (1448)

The *first element* is the *action of the penitent* (the one receiving the sacrament). After examining his or her conscience, the penitent is sorry for his or her sins and seeks the sacrament. The penitent goes and confesses his or her sins to the priest and does the prescribed act of penance. The *second element* is the *action of God* working through His Church. Most specifically, it is the words of absolution said by the priest, who also assigns an appropriate act of penance.

(6) How often should Catholics go to Confession? What sins must be confessed? (1457-58)

Catholics should receive the sacrament frequently, perhaps once a month or even once every two weeks. At minimum, Catholics are required to confess serious sins at least once a year. Also, anyone aware of having committed a mortal sin should seek reconciliation with the Church through Confession before receiving Communion (see Matthew 5: 23-24; 1 Corinthians 11: 27-30). Catholics are only required to confess serious or mortal sins, but the confession of lesser or venial sins is, nonetheless, recommended by the Church as an invaluable help in our battle against our sinful tendencies.

(7) What is my attitude toward illness? What was Christ's attitude? (1503-05) Is there biblical evidence of a sacrament that is administered to the sick? (1510)

Answers to the first question will vary. Jesus showed great compassion toward the sick. The many healings He performed showed that "the Kingdom of God was at hand," which entailed victory over sin, suffering, and even death. Through His own suffering and death He redeemed human suffering which, when united with His Passion, can be redemptive for us and for others.

The Letter of James bears witness to Christ's institution of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick: **"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord"** (James 5:14-15).

(8) Have I ever received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick? Have I witnessed others receiving it? What has been my experience of the sacrament? What are some of its principal effects? (1532)

Answers to the first part of the question will vary. The effects of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick include:

- The union of the sick person to the Passion of Christ, for his or her own good and that of the whole Church.
- The special strength, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age.
- The forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was unable to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The restoration of health, if God considers it conducive to the salvation of his or her soul.
- The preparation for passing over to eternal life.

(9) What is Viaticum? (1524) What sacraments are administered, when possible, as a person nears death? (1525)

Viaticum is the reception of the Eucharist by a dying person. It is spiritual food for one's passing over to eternal life. With the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, the reception of Holy Communion as Viaticum constitute the "last sacraments" of the Christian, which prepares him or her for the journey home to the Father.

(10) What is my attitude toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How would I explain the sacrament to someone who isn't Catholic?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What are the two sacraments at the service of communion? (1534) What is distinctive about these two sacraments? (1535)

The two sacraments at the service of communion are Holy Orders and Matrimony. These sacraments are specially ordered to the salvation of others—to bringing others into “communion” with Christ and His Church. The Sacrament of Holy Orders consecrates the recipient for service to the flock, whom he is to “feed” by word and sacrament. As we will discover in greater depth in the next session, the Sacrament of Matrimony is ordered to the salvation of both spouses and their children. Further, the family—or “domestic Church”—is called to be a leaven within the wider communion.

(2) Why is the sacrament called “Holy Orders”? (1537-38)

The word “*Orders*” designates an ecclesial body into which one enters by means of a special consecration. The ceremony where this consecration takes place is called an “ordination.” Through a special gift of the Holy Spirit, the Sacrament of Holy Orders enables the ordained minister to exercise a *sacred power* in the name and authority of Christ for the service of the Church.

(3) Name some Old Testament figures who foreshadowed Christ’s institution of the New Covenant priesthood? (1539-44) What do I know about them?

Some of the Old Testament figures include:

Melchizedek: This mysterious figure appears in Genesis during the time of Abraham. He is identified as the “King of Salem.” He is also a priest whose offering of bread and wine long predated the animal sacrifices of the Levites. Psalm 110: 4 refers to him as a “priest forever.” While Christ was not a Levite by birth, Scripture refers to Him as a high priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5:10). Like Melchizedek, Christ is a priest-king of mysterious origins, who is a priest forever and whose offering was bread and wine.

Levites: These are the descendents of Levi, who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). The descendents of Levi did not have their own section of Israel. Rather, they were set apart for priestly service to the other tribes of Israel, with God Himself as their inheritance.

Aaron: He was a Levite and the older brother of Moses. The Book of Exodus describes his role in the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. Aaron, his sons, and descendents served as priests of the Old Covenant (Exodus 28: 40-41).

(4) If Christ is our true high priest whose once-for-all sacrifice redeemed us, why does the Church have priests? (1545)

Those who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders participate in the one priesthood of Christ. Unlike the priests of the Old Covenant who had to offer sacrifices over and over again, the priests of the New Covenant re-present the once-for-all sacrifice at the altar, making it present and effective right here in our midst. For that reason, the priest is said to function *in persona Christi*, meaning "in the person of Christ"—and not on their own authority. See also CCC 1366-67.

(5) What are the three degrees of Holy Orders? (1554)

The three degrees of Holy Orders are:

- Episcopacy (Bishops)
- Presbyterate (Presbyters, better known as Priests)
- Diaconate (Deacons)

(6) How do I understand the ministry of priests? (1567)

The *priest* receives the grace to act "in the person of Christ." As a co-worker of the bishop, he is consecrated to preach the Gospel, to celebrate divine worship—especially the Eucharist—and to be a shepherd of the faithful. The priest exercises his ministry in a "particular Church," which is commonly called a diocese or archdiocese (or eparchy in the Eastern Churches). Some, however, are members of religious communities, such as Franciscans and Dominicans.

The priest's ministry is carried out in sacramental brotherhood with other priests, who form the "presbyterate." In communion with the bishop, and depending upon him, the priests bear responsibility for the particular Church.

(7) What is the essential rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders? (1573) Have I ever attended an ordination? What was it like?

Holy Orders is conferred by means of the *imposition of hands* on the head of the ordinand (i.e., the person being ordained) by the bishop, who offers the solemn *prayer* of consecration. The bishop asks God for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the ordinand to help him fulfill his ministry.

Answers regarding one's personal experience, if any, of an ordination will vary. We encourage you to seek out when the next ordination will take place in your diocese and try to attend.

(8) Who confers the Sacrament of Holy Orders? (1575-76) Who can receive this sacrament? (1577-80)

Only validly ordained bishops, as successors of the apostles, can confer the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

This sacrament can only be validly received by a baptized man. The Church recognizes herself as bound by this choice made by the Lord Himself. No one can demand to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders, but must be judged suitable for the ministry by the authorities of the Church.

Bishops must be celibate, without any exception. For the priesthood in the Latin-rite Church, men who are practicing Catholics and celibate are chosen, men who intend to continue to live a celibate life “for the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:12). In the Eastern Churches, marriage is not permitted after one has been ordained. Married men can be ordained to the permanent diaconate.

(9) How is the common priesthood of all the baptized distinct from the ministerial priesthood of those who have received Holy Orders? (1592)

The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful. It is at the service of the common priesthood (i.e., all the faithful). Through the ministerial priesthood, Christ is continually building up and providing for His people. The ordained ministers exercise their call to service for the Church through teaching, divine worship, and pastoral governance.

(10) How has my faith been strengthened by the homilies given by bishops, priests, and deacons? How has my faith been renewed and bolstered by the ministry of priests in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? What can I do to show my parish priest how much I appreciate him?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) Is marriage a merely human institution? (1603) What was God's plan in creating us male and female? (1604-05)

No, marriage is not merely a human institution. It was established by God when He created men and women in His image. Marriage has God-given dignity, and the well-being of society—as well as the Church—is closely bound up with the state of marriage and family life.

From the beginning of human history, God called man and woman into an intimate union of life and love. Through their mutual gift of self to each other, “they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matthew 19:6). God called the man and woman to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1: 28), and also to exercise responsible stewardship with respect to God's creation.

(2) Where did Jesus perform His first public miracle? What does this event teach us about marriage? (1613)

As recorded in the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, Jesus worked His first public miracle at the wedding feast at Cana, at the request of His mother. This incident shows forth the goodness of marriage. Even more, the Church understands the “Wedding at Cana” as a proclamation that in the new covenant ushered in by Christ, marriage will be an “efficacious sign”—the sacrament of God's love for His Church (see also Ephesians 5: 21-32; CCC 1617).

(3) Does God call all men and women to marriage? (1618-20)

Not everyone is called to marriage. God calls some men and women to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of virginity or of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who are called to the consecrated life renounce the great good of marriage to focus on the things of the Lord and seek to please Him. They become a sign of the primacy of Christ's love, of the ardent expectation of His glorious return, and of the new heavens and new earth, where “they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mark 12: 25).

(4) What is meant by “matrimonial consent”? (1625-26)

In the Latin-rite Church, the baptized man and woman confer the sacrament upon each other by expressing their mutual consent before the Church. Without mutual consent, there is no marriage. At minimum, this requires that the consent is a free, conscious decision to get married, free from duress, coercion, psychological disturbance, etc.

The couple declares their consent before God and the Church when they say, “I take you [name] to be my [husband/wife]. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health . . .” Their mutual consent is further symbolized through the exchange of rings as a sign of their mutual love and fidelity.

(5) What is a mixed marriage? What does the Church say about mixed marriages? (1633-34) What has been my own personal experience of mixed marriages?

A mixed marriage is a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. This is distinct from marriages with what is known as “disparity of cult,” in which the non-Catholic party is not a baptized Christian.

In both of these situations, the spouses should be open to the essential purposes and properties of marriage. Further, the Catholic party must be ready to accept the commitment to persevere in the Catholic faith and to raise their children as Catholics.

The Church does not consider such religious differences an “insurmountable obstacle” to marriage, and pastorally assists such couples in their journey. At the same time, the Church recognizes the tensions that can arise within the family, especially when it comes to the religious education of the children. Further, the differences in religious beliefs may well create religious indifference on the part of the children.

The Catholic partner, through prayer, authentic married love, and the practice of virtue within the home, is called to put into practice this challenge from St. Paul:

“For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband.” --1 Corinthians 7:14

(6) What are the two primary effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony? (1638) How might these effects be counter-cultural in today’s society?

The Catechism identifies two principal effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony. First, God seals the consent of the spouses through an indissoluble, exclusive *marriage bond*. This bond exists in a valid Christian marriage even when the state and the spouses themselves later consent to the legal fiction of divorce. As Christ Himself said, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19: 6).

The other effect is the *grace of the sacrament*. All sacraments are instruments of divine grace. The grace of this sacrament empowers the couple to fulfill the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage (see next question). Through this grace, spouses grow in love and unity. They help each other on the path to holiness, and together they help their children to discover their vocation as beloved children of God.

Marriage as a permanent, exclusive relationship inherently open to the gift of children runs counter to many of the messages we receive in our culture.

(7) What are the purposes of marriage? (1643)

The Church teaches that the purposes, or ends, of marriage are (a) the good of the spouses and (b) the procreation and education of children. These two purposes of married love are called “unitive” and “procreative,” respectively.

A purpose of marriage is “unitive” in that from the beginning the man and the woman are called to become one flesh (Genesis 2: 24). And now, as a sacrament of the new covenant, the married love of husband and wife images the love of Christ and His Bride, the Church.

The other principal end of marriage is “procreative,” meaning that marriage is meant to be fruitful. This fruitfulness on the natural level entails the openness to the gift of children (see Genesis 1: 28). On the supernatural level, it involves forming our children as disciples of Christ, and leading holy lives characterized by charity, generosity, hospitality, and sacrifice.

The unitive and procreative purposes of marriage are safeguarded by the indissoluble marriage bond as well as by the mutual fidelity of the spouses.

(8) What is the Church’s approach toward divorce and remarriage? (1649-51)

The Church, in fidelity to the teaching of Christ, cannot recognize the union of a man and woman where at least one of them is civilly divorced and remarried. As Our Lord Himself said:

“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” --Mark 10:11-12

The Church has a deep, pastoral concern for couples in this situation. The Church encourages such couples to grow in faith, pray, engage in charitable works, and provide for the Christian education of their children.

However, because of the presumptive validity of the prior marriage(s), the couple may not receive absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and receive Holy Communion as long as their situation persists. This is a “hard saying” in our culture, as many Catholic families have experienced divorce and remarriage. While the “truth” is that the situation is a serious violation of God’s moral law, such truth cannot be separated from charity. The Church—and all Catholics—are called to extend their hands in friendship to their brothers and sisters, who often feel alienated and unwelcome in the Church.

(9) Why is the home considered a domestic Church? (1656-57, 1666)

The Christian home is to be a “church in miniature,” or microcosm of the universal Church. Just as the Church exists to evangelize, the Christian home is a “domestic Church,” where children receive the first proclamation of the Gospel, through the teaching, training, and example of their parents. Each individual Christian family is part of the “Family of God,” where all members play an important role in building up the community of faith within the home. The family is called to be a school of virtue and a powerhouse of prayer and Christian charity.

(10) Think of married couples whom you really admire. What qualities have helped them build a strong, Christian marriage? How has their marriage strengthened my faith?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What are the “two ways”? (Matthew 7:13-14) What do the “two ways” teach us about Christian morality? (1696)

Christ Himself describes the two “ways,” or “gates,” in Matthew 7:13-14:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

This saying of Our Lord reminds us that our moral decisions matter. We are called to follow the Lord Jesus. This “way” involves the cross (“the way is hard”), but it ultimately leads us to abundant, everlasting life.

(2) What are the principal components of Catholic teaching, or catechesis, when it comes to Christian morality? (1697-98)

Christian morality may be approached from several different, complementary perspectives:

- The *Holy Spirit*, who guides us from within
- *Grace*, which saves us and empowers us to live well
- The *Beatitudes*, Christ’s blueprint for happiness
- *Sin and forgiveness*, for one cannot live a moral life without recognizing that he is a sinner, and that mercy is his
- *Human and Christian virtues*, which dispose us toward our true good
- *Love of God and neighbor*, which summarizes the *Ten Commandments*
- *Communion of saints*, as God saves us not merely as individuals, but as His beloved family

But at the heart of all of this is Jesus Christ, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14: 6). Christian morality is always about remaining focused on Christ, and following where He leads.

(3) How is man divided in himself? (1707) How does Christ remedy this division? (1709)

Mankind was created to desire all that is good, true, and beautiful. That desire is still present in every one of us but, as a result of original sin, we are prone to error and sin. We all experience a battle between good and evil within us.

Christ delivered us from the power of sin. He now offers each of us new life in the Spirit. As sons and daughters of God, we receive the grace to choose the good and grow in virtue, despite our sinfulness. Christ urges us to grow in charity and holiness, until we enter the fullness of new life in heaven.

(4) What are some of the biblical expressions used to describe the beatitude, or happiness, to which God calls us? (1720) How do we envision eternal life?

Some biblical expressions that describe human beatitude include:

- "the kingdom of God" (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15)
- "they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)
- seeing God "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- entering the "joy" of the Lord (Matthew 25: 21-23)
- entering God's "rest" (Hebrews 4:7-11)
- becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1: 4)
- "paradise" (Luke 23:43)
- "the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18)

(5) How do we attain beatitude? (1722) What moral choices does it entail? (1723)

The beatitude, or fullness of happiness, to which all human beings aspire is attained when we enter the glory of God in eternal life. This enjoyment of eternal life surpasses human capabilities. It is a supernatural and gratuitous gift of God, as is the grace which leads to it.

This promised happiness confronts us with decisive moral choices concerning earthly goods, as we serve God, not the "mammon" of wealth, possessions, or worldly achievements (Matthew 6: 24). Our Lord says, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5: 8). We must purify our hearts in order to love God above all things and so enjoy the beatitude for which we were created.

(6) What is human freedom? (1731) How is freedom distinct from license?

"Freedom is the power given by God to act or not to act, to do this or to do that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. Freedom characterizes properly human acts. The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. Freedom attains its proper perfection when it is directed toward God, the highest good and our beatitude. Freedom implies also the possibility of choosing between good and evil. The choice of evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to the slavery of sin" (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 363).

License, on the other hand, involves doing whatever we want. Now that may sound like freedom, but there is a significant difference: License is freedom disconnected from the truth and from our true good. In our culture, it entails doing whatever "we feel like," without reference to whether what we're doing is right. Because of that, license is often accompanied by *relativism*, which leaves it to the individual to decide for himself or herself what is right and wrong.

(7) What are the three sources of a moral act? (1750)

There are three sources, or components, of a human action. They are:

- The **object** chosen: The objective act, in other words, the action itself.
- The **intention**: The reason(s) or purpose(s) behind the act.
- The **circumstances**: The real-life context of the actions, such as where, when, how, with whom, state of mind, etc.

A morally acceptable human action requires the goodness of its object, intention, and circumstances (CCC 1760).

(8) Are some actions always morally wrong, notwithstanding one's good intentions? (1753, 1756) How would I explain this truth to a friend?

Yes, some actions are *intrinsically evil*. These actions in and of themselves always involve an immoral choice. Examples include blasphemy, murder, and adultery. Choosing such acts entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil that can never be justified by appealing to any possible good effects that could result. One's good intentions can never justify an evil action.

Here's what Blessed Pope John Paul II had to say on the subject:

"In teaching the existence of intrinsically evil acts, the Church accepts the teaching of Sacred Scripture. The Apostle Paul emphatically states: 'Do not be deceived: neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

"If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain 'irremediably' evil acts; *per se* and in themselves they are not capable of

being ordered to God and to the good of the person. 'As for acts which are themselves sins, Saint Augustine writes, like theft, fornication, blasphemy, who would dare affirm that, by doing them for good motives, they would no longer be sins, or, what is even more absurd, that they would be sins that are justified?'

"Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act 'subjectively' good or defensible as a choice."

--Blessed Pope John Paul II, encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor* ("Splendor of Truth"), no. 81 (footnote omitted).

(9) What are some of the causes of errors of judgment when it comes to moral conduct? (1792)

Some of the reasons we make erroneous judgments of conscience include:

- Ignorance of Christ and His Gospel
- Bad example given by others
- Enslavement to one's passions
- Assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience (in other words, a conscience disconnected from the truth)
- Rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching
- Lack of conversion
- Lack of charity

(10) How do I approach the subject of morality? Do I tend to view Christian morality as merely following a bunch of rules, or as embracing God's blueprint for human happiness? How has this section of the Catechism affected my perspective on this subject?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What are the four principal human virtues called? What are they? (1804)

The four principal human virtues are known as the *cardinal* virtues. In this case, “cardinal” comes from the Latin noun *cardo*, which means “hinge.” The four cardinal virtues are the “hinge virtues,” with all the other human or moral virtues grouped around them.

The four cardinal virtues are:

- **Prudence:** Discerning the good to be done and choosing the proper means of accomplishing it.
- **Justice:** Giving God and neighbor what is their due.
- **Fortitude:** Also known as courage, persevering in the good despite difficulties.
- **Temperance:** Moderating the attraction of pleasure and using created goods in a balanced way.

(2) What are theological virtues? How are they distinct from other virtues? (1812-13)

The theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity. They have God Himself as their origin, motive, and object. This fact distinguishes them from the other virtues. In addition, while other virtues are acquired through human effort (CCC 1804), the theological virtues are infused at Baptism when we receive the gift of sanctifying grace.

Just as special equipment allows one to live underwater or even in outer space for extended periods, the theological virtues bestow on the Christian the capacity to live in a relationship with the Trinity. They are the foundation of the Christian’s moral activity, and they give new life and meaning to the human virtues. They are the pledge of the Holy Spirit’s saving action in our souls.

(3) What important reminder does CCC 1816 give us? How can I better live this teaching in my daily life?

CCC 1816 reminds us that we must not only keep the faith and live the faith, but also bear witness to it and spread it, despite opposition. The Catechism cites the following quote from Our Lord as supporting the proposition that bearing witness to the faith is necessary for salvation:

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven”
(Matthew 10:32-33).

(4) What is the virtue of hope? (1817) Why is this virtue so important? (1818)

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life itself and the grace we need to attain it. It enables us to press on as pilgrims in this life, as we strive toward our heavenly prize (see Philippians 3:12-14).

Hope corresponds to the aspirations of all men and women to be happy beyond measure. It invests our daily activities with meaning and keeps us from discouragement. Hope helps us to set aside our tendencies toward selfishness so that we may find fulfillment in giving of ourselves in charity to God and neighbor.

(5) How does the virtue of charity affect our relationship with God? (1828)

When we live the virtue of charity, we experience the freedom of the children of God. We live not as slaves or as laborers working for a wage, but truly as children of God, who first loved us and sent His Son to save us. Scripture further says that “if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).

(6) What are the gifts and fruits of the Spirit? (1831-32) Have I noticed the “fruits of the Spirit” at work in my life? When?

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (from Isaiah 11:1-2)

1. Wisdom
2. Understanding
3. Counsel
4. Fortitude
5. Knowledge
6. Piety
7. Fear of the Lord

The twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit (from Galatians 5:22-23)

1. Charity
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Generosity
8. Gentleness

- 9. Faithfulness
- 10. Modesty
- 11. Self-control
- 12. Chastity

(7) How does the Catechism define sin? (1849-50) How would I define sin in my own words?

The Glossary at the back of the Catechism defines sin as “an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God. In judging the gravity of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins.”

(8) What is the difference between a mortal sin and a venial sin? What constitutes a “mortal sin”? (1854-57)

A mortal sin consists in deliberately choosing something that is gravely contrary to the divine law and our ultimate good. It destroys the life of sanctifying grace in the soul, thus making it “mortal,” or “deadly.” If it goes unrepented, it will lead to eternal death.

The three conditions for a mortal sin are:

- (a) Grave matter
- (b) Full knowledge of the sinfulness of the act
- (c) Complete consent of the will to the act

Scripture attests that there are also sins that are not mortal (1 John 5:16-17). These are known as venial sins. Since venial sins do not completely destroy the life of grace within the soul, they are essentially different from mortal sins. These sins may be of less serious matter, or perhaps committed with less than full knowledge and consent. While less serious, they are nonetheless an offense against God that weaken our charity and hinder spiritual growth.

(9) What are the seven deadly sins? (1866) Which of these deadly or capital sins causes me the most difficulty?

The seven deadly sins are pride, avarice (or greed or covetousness), envy, wrath (or anger), lust, gluttony, and sloth (or acedia). When we give in to these sins, they lead to other sins. We then develop the habit of sin, which is called *vice*. Three ways to counteract vice in our lives would be:

- **Examination of conscience:** Is there habitual sin or vice in my life? Which of the deadly sins most frequently causes me to stumble?
- **Prayer and sacraments:** We need God’s grace to root out the sin in us. Frequent reception of the Eucharist as well as regular Confession (once a month is a good benchmark) is highly recommended.

- **Develop virtue:** In place of bad habits, or vice, we should strive to build up good habits, or virtue. When an athlete is in rehab, the place of the injury (e.g., knee) is exactly what needs to be exercised. Similarly, where we have been injured by sin, we should, by small, conscious acts, work to build up strong spiritual "muscle."

(10) Based on what I've learned over the past two weeks, how would I explain "conscience"--with charity and sensitivity--to a friend or relative who says that he or she is simply following his or her conscience in rejecting Catholic teaching and engaging in sinful activity?

While answers will vary, the answer should take into account the teaching on moral conscience found in CCC 1776-1794, especially 1791-92.

A good way to phrase it is to say that conscience is about doing what God wants, not what I want. There are objective norms of conduct established by God and taught through His Church that must be respected and followed, regardless of our own subjective feelings. These norms do not hinder human freedom, but rather help us achieve the happiness for which we were created.

Responses

(1) What is the relationship between the human person and society? (1879)

God did not create us as isolated individuals, but rather as social beings. Further, he doesn't save us merely as individuals, but rather He saves us as His family, the Church. Therefore, we live in society. It's the way we were made. Through our interaction with others, we develop our potential and fulfill our vocation.

Yet, social institutions were made for man, and not the other way around (CCC 1881). For that reason, men and women can never be viewed merely as means to an end (CCC 1887). Instead, society at every level should promote the good of the individual human person.

(2) What is subsidiarity? (1883) Give an example of this principle at work.

Subsidiarity is the principle that neither the state nor other higher authorities should assume the responsibilities belonging to individuals or lower authorities and thereby deprive them of their proper authority.

The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to certain forms of centralization, bureaucratization, and welfare assistance and to excessive intrusion of the state in local matters (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 187). Rather, it strives to harmonize the relationships among individuals and the various levels of society (Catechism, no. 1885), providing support as needed.

One example of subsidiarity at work would be the government respecting the primary responsibility of parents for the education of their children (see CCC 2226, 2229).

(3) What is authority? (1897) Where does it come from? (1899) What are its limits? (1903)

"Authority" refers to the quality that empowers people and governments to make laws and expect obedience. Every human community needs a legitimate authority to preserve order and peace. The foundation of such authority lies in human nature, but ultimately it corresponds to the order established by God, who is the source of all authority.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." --Romans 13:1

Authority must be exercised for the common good. If one in authority enacts unjust laws or makes decisions that are contrary to the moral order, the citizens are not bound in conscience to obey.

(4) What is the “common good”? (1906) What are its three essential ingredients? (1907-09)

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) defined the *common good* as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26).

In other words, we can say that the “common good” involves all those things that facilitate the pursuit of happiness of all people. As the cliché goes, it’s all about making the world a “better place” in the best possible sense.

The three ingredients of the common good are:

(a) Respect for the human person—including the protection of the most fundamental, inalienable rights.

(b) Authentic development—providing access to basic human necessities, such as food, clothing, and work, which builds culture and enables all to respond freely to God’s call.

(c) Peace—fostering the security and stability of a just social order.

(5) How do we participate in promoting the common good? (1914-15) How does this “participation” look in my own life?

In the context of the Church’s social teaching, *participation* involves the voluntary and generous engagement of a human person in society. It means that citizens, both as individuals and in association with others, either directly or through representation, are called to contribute to the cultural, economic, political, and social life of the civil community to which they belong. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.

This involves taking charge of areas within our direct responsibility, such as our family and work, but also to the extent possible taking an active part in public life.

(6) What is social justice? (1928) How does society promote social justice?

Social justice is the respect that society must show to all members of the human family. It ensures that the rights and dignity of all people are upheld. Then they can peaceably pursue happiness in this life and in the life to come.

Social justice is a broad concept. The Church provides an immense body of teaching in this area. In general, though, social justice boils down to the application of three foundational principles:

(a) Respecting the God-given rights of all human persons (CCC 1929-33)

(b) Recognizing the equal dignity we share as men and women created in the image of God (CCC 1934-38)

(c) Fostering a spirit of solidarity within the human family (CCC 1939-42)

(7) How is respect for the human person related to social justice? (1929-33)

Society ensures social justice when it respects the dignity and rights of the human person. Society exists for the good of man, and not the other way around.

The Church emphasizes that fundamental human rights flow from man's God-given dignity and must be respected by those in authority.

Of all the basic human rights, the most fundamental is the right to life itself, without which other rights would be rendered meaningless.

In respecting basic human rights, social justice urges us to create just social structures, putting an end to the fears, prejudices, and selfishness that leads to unjust discrimination, division, and ultimately violence.

However, we're called to go even beyond that, to strive for charity, such that we see other people as our brothers and sisters. In other words, we see them as "other selves," so that we can fulfill the great commandment of love: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

We are especially called to reach out to our brothers and sisters who are most in need. We understand that whatsoever we do for them, we do for the Lord (see Matthew 25: 40). That's why the Church has what is known as a "preferential option for the poor" (CCC 2448) through which we bring the compassion of Christ to the reality of human misery.

(8) How do I understand human equality and differences? (1945-47)

All people possess equal dignity as creatures fashioned in the image of God. When the Son of God took on our human nature, He united Himself with every man, woman, and child. As St. Paul writes:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

--Galatians 3:28

This is the basis for the Church's perennial teaching on the basic dignity, equality, and brotherhood of all people, regardless of nation, race, social class, culture, or sex.

Despite our fundamental equality, each person is unique, and so we encounter many differences among people.

Some differences point to our different gifts, which should be used to benefit others. In this regard, the Church emphasizes the complementarity of men and women as equals who mutually benefit from the differences found in the opposite sex.

Other differences point to our weaknesses, limitations, and infirmities, and this shows our need for others.

Still other differences tragically become the occasion of sinful inequities--such as racism or oppression of workers--that must be overcome. In this regard, the Catechism (no. 1869) refers to "structures of sin" that Christians must strive to dismantle.

(9) What is solidarity? (1939) How is it manifested? (1940) What can I do to foster bonds of solidarity within my own sphere of relationships?

Solidarity is the virtue that entails our disposition to share our material and spiritual goods with the rest of the human family. This sense of brotherhood shows itself through the just distribution of goods, fair remuneration for work, and zeal for a more just social order.

As an eminently Christian virtue, solidarity also entails the sharing of spiritual goods with our neighbor, which are ultimately more valuable than material goods.

(10) How familiar was I with Catholic social teaching prior to this session? What new insights did I draw from this session? How does Catholic social teaching affect my own life?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) How does the Catechism define “law”? (1951) What images come to mind when I think of law? What is the source of all law? What are some expressions of the moral law? (1952)

Law is an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by the one who is in charge of the community. All law finds its basis and truth in the **eternal law**, which is God's wise, fatherly governance of all creation. Human law, then, is a participation in the providence of the living God.

There are many different expressions of the moral law. In addition to the eternal law, the Catechism mentions natural law, revealed law (Ten Commandments and the Gospel of Christ), and also civil and ecclesiastical laws.

(2) What is the natural law? (1954, 1978-79)

The natural law is the law by which we come to know the eternal law--God's law--using our own reason. The Catechism describes it as a participation in the wisdom and goodness of God, who made us in such a way that we can be responsible for our own actions as we strive toward our ultimate good--eternal happiness with God.

There are four essential points regarding the natural law found in CCC 1956-60:

(a) The natural law was **given to us at creation**. St. Thomas expressed it this way: "The natural law is nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation."

(b) The natural law is **accessible to all people**, so nobody is excused from following the natural law according to one's own lights. By way of a chilling illustration, listen to how St. Paul not only alludes to the natural law, but harshly chastises those who reject the natural law and thus suppress the truth:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." --Romans 1:18-20

(c) The natural law is **immutable**. After all, God's truth, including the truth about the human person, does not change, despite the great diversity of societies and cultures throughout human history. When individuals or even societies reject elements of the natural law, we must nonetheless remember that it still exists. When we lose sight of who God is, we also lose a sense of who we are, and the result is moral

blindness. Yet, deep down, the spark of the divine, reflected in the natural law, cannot be totally removed from the heart of man.

(d) After the fall, the precepts of the natural law are **not perceived clearly**. We need grace and divine Revelation to perceive the moral law, as Pope Pius XII noted, “. . . with facility, with firm certainty, and with no admixture of error.”

The natural law is shared by all men and women. It provides a basic moral framework upon which God will build throughout salvation history.

(3) How does the Church view the Old Law today? (1963) What attitude do I have toward the Old Testament, particularly the Ten Commandments?

The Church understands the Old Law to be good, holy, and spiritual. On multiple occasions, Christ Himself exhorted His listeners to obey the Commandments. On one occasion, He went so far as to say:

Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. –Matthew 5:19

Yet, Christianity also recognizes its limitations. The Old Law pointed out the requirements of the moral law, but did not provide the grace of the Holy Spirit to fulfill them, so the Old Law in one sense was a law of bondage to sin.

(4) The New Law, or the Law of the Gospel, ushered in by Jesus Christ, represents the fullness of God's moral law. What are some other names for the New Law? (1972) What is its relationship to the Old Law? (1984)

The New Law is the **law of love**, because the motive for our actions is not fear of divine retribution, but the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

It is the **law of grace**, because with the New Law we receive the grace of the sacraments to live our new life in Christ.

It is the **law of freedom**, because we are no longer slaves to sin, but free to choose the way of the Lord Jesus. This way leads to authentic freedom and lasting happiness. For some, this even entails accepting the radical invitation to embrace a life consecrated to Christ through the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The New Law fulfills and surpasses the Old Law and brings it to perfection.

(5) In my own words, what is justification? (1994, 2017-20)

In the context of the Christian faith, “justification” is the process by which God establishes us in a right relationship with Him. This was made possible by Christ's sacrifice. Justification entails the liberation from sin through the gift of grace. This makes us “righteous” in the sight of God (see Romans 3:22, 6:3-11, 9:30).

We receive this gift by faith in the liturgical context of the Sacrament of Baptism. While justification entails the acquittal or pardon of our sins, even more it establishes us as children of God by adoption, making us heirs of eternal life (see 1 John 3:1; Titus 3:7).

Justification implies an orientation to growth in holiness. In other words, justification doesn't mean that God simply chooses to ignore our sins. Rather, it's a process of ongoing healing, transformation, and renewal as we cooperate with the work of sanctification that the Holy Spirit is working in us.

(6) What is the relationship between grace and human freedom? (2001-02)

Grace precedes, prepares, and elicits our free response. We need grace even to seek grace! It corresponds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom. God calls us to use our freedom to cooperate with grace, which in turn makes us freer.

The interaction of grace (God's activity) and freedom (human activity) is a great mystery. God has fashioned us in such a way that grace is not imposed on us, but rather perfects and builds upon our human nature. We do well to take to heart St. Augustine's words: "Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on us."

(7) How would I explain the concept of "merit" to a Christian who thinks Catholics "earn" their way to heaven through good works? (2007-08)

We agree with other Christians that no one on their own can attain salvation. That would be the heresy of Pelagianism, which the Catholic Church condemned very early in her history. No one can merit the initial grace that leads to conversion.

The late Jesuit theologian, John Hardon, describes merit as "divine reward for the practice of virtue." Merit is a Catholic doctrine that by his good works a person in the state of grace really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God. It is faith working through charity (see James 2:14 and following).

The important point to stress with those who do not understand the Catholic concept of "merit" is that it presupposes what we call a "state of grace," in other words, the life of Christ in us. The good works that we do are primarily and necessarily attributable to divine grace, and secondarily to our free cooperation with grace, which enables us to bear fruit for the kingdom of God.

After all, Our Lord tells us that we are mere "branches" (John 15:1-11). Any fruit that we bear cannot be understood apart from Christ, the true Vine, and His Father, the Vinedresser.

(8) Is everyone called to holiness? (2013-15) Who have been examples to me of holiness and the perfection of charity?

Yes! The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) emphasized that "all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 40, quoted in CCC 2013). This is known as the *universal call to holiness*, which is the vocation of all the baptized, and not merely priests and religious.

(9) What is the role of the Magisterium when it comes to the Church's moral teachings? (2050-51; for more in-depth explanation, see 2032-40)

The Pope and bishops in union with him are authentic teachers of the apostolic faith, endowed with the authority of Christ (CCC 888, 2034). They are called to preach the faith that is to be believed and applied in moral life, including moral questions that fall within the purview of the natural law. This duty is reflected in the Code of Canon Law:

"To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls" (canon 747, as quoted in CCC 2032).

(10) How do I understand the relationship between Christian morality and the Gospel message? What can I do in my own life to strengthen the connection between what I believe and how I live?

Answers will vary. The following quote from no. 433 of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* may assist with the reflection, as it affirms the witness value of Christian morality:

"Because their lives are conformed to the Lord Jesus, Christians draw others to faith in the true God, build up the Church, inform the world with the spirit of the Gospel, and hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God."

Responses

(1) Where are the Ten Commandments listed in the Bible? Why are they also called the Decalogue?
(2056) How many of them can I name?

The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The Ten Commandments is the *Decalogue*, which means "ten words" (Ex. 34:28). These "words" summarize the law given by God to Moses as the blueprint for a happy life free from slavery to sin. The Ten Commandments are:

1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the LORD'S day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

(2) What is the place of the Ten Commandments in the life of the Church? (2064-68) What has been the place of the Ten Commandments in my own life?

The Ten Commandments are perennially valid. For that reason, in fidelity to Scripture and the constant teaching of Christ and His Church, Christians are obliged to keep the commandments. They express our fundamental duties owed in justice toward God and neighbor. Upon this foundation, the virtues of faith, hope, and especially charity are able to flourish in us, and we are able to live fully human lives in freedom.

(3) The First Commandment beckons us to foster the theological virtues of faith (2088), hope (2090-92), and charity (2093). How would I summarize each of these theological virtues in a sentence or two?

Through *faith* we believe all that God has revealed through Christ as proclaimed by His Church, as we reject sins such as deliberate doubt, heresy, schism, and apostasy.

Through *hope* we place all our trust in God's goodness and promises, and we reject the sins of despair and presumption.

Through *charity* we love God above all things, and we reject sins such as indifference, lukewarmness (for a chilling warning, see Revelation 3:14-16), and ingratitude.

(4) The First Commandment says, "You shall have no other gods before me." What are some ways that one can violate this commandment? (2110, 2138-40; for more detailed information, see 2111-28)

The Catechism sets forth several sins against the First Commandment, including:

Superstition and Divination: In other words, the command forbids any deviation from the authentic worship of God. Some extreme forms would include calling upon Satan himself or conjuring up the dead. This also includes consulting horoscopes, astrology, tarot cards, and various "New Age" practices.

Idolatry: This involves more than mere pagan worship. Anytime we put money, power, or any creature in the place of "God," we have committed idolatry.

Irreligion: The failure to give what is due to God. This includes the sins of putting God to the test, sacrilege, and simony.

Atheism and Agnosticism: The former is the outright rejection of God's existence; the latter is a persistent uncertainty that can easily make us lukewarm or indifferent to the faith.

(5) The First Commandment also provides that "You shall not make for yourself a graven image . . ." The Church is known for her promotion of religious art, and many Catholic homes, schools, and businesses have crucifixes, as well as statues, icons, and other images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints. Does the display of these images constitute a violation of the First Commandment? (2129-32)

There is a big difference between an image that reminds us of the one, true God and the angels and saints, and an image that actually takes the place of God. Catholics understand, for example, that the crucifix is a reminder of God's saving act on Calvary. We don't worship the crucifix as if it were God.

The Church formally addressed this issue at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, over 200 years before the Eastern Schism and over 700 years before the rise of Protestantism. The Council affirmed that the veneration of sacred images is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation and is not contrary to the First Commandment.

(6) "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so" (James 3:10). What does this Scripture verse teach me? What resolution(s) can I make today to improve the quality of my speech?

Answers will vary. Some things we can do to grow in our observance of the Second Commandment include:

- Fostering a sense of the sacred, as we call to mind God's presence and action in our midst.
- Proclaiming without fear our belief in the Holy Trinity, even through practices such as making the Sign of the Cross as we drive past a Church.
- Listening attentively to the Word of God.
- Offering prayers of praise and thanksgiving, and by invoking His name in times of need.
- Taking oaths very seriously, in honesty and integrity, because taking an oath ("swearing to God") is to call upon God as a witness to the truth of what we are saying.

(7) What is the relationship between the Second Commandment and the Sacrament of Baptism? (2156)

The Sacrament of Baptism is conferred in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We recall our Baptism every time we make the Sign of the Cross, which again is made in the *name* of the Holy Trinity. We become partakers of the very life of God (2 Peter 1:4) at Baptism, so we identify in a personal way with God and acquire the name and identity of "Christian." We also know that God calls each of us by name (Isaiah 43:1; John 10:3). Therefore, we should exercise utmost care in selecting a Christian name.

(8) Why do we observe the Lord's Day, or Sabbath, on Sunday? (2174)

The seventh day of the Jewish week is called the Sabbath day. The Third Commandment, originally given to Moses for the chosen people, is all about observing "rest" on the Sabbath, thereby making it holy, or set apart for God (see Exodus 31:15).

Christians keep holy the Lord's Day (Sunday), not the seventh or Sabbath day (Saturday). This transfer took place early in the life of the Church.

Sunday was selected because it is the day of the Resurrection of Christ, "the Lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28). As "the first day of the week" (Mark 16:2), Sunday recalls the beginning of creation. As the "eighth day," or the day following the sabbath, it symbolizes the new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17) brought about by Christ's Resurrection. For us, then, the day of the Lord has become the first of all days and of all feasts, as we find our rest in God alone (see also *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 452).

(9) How are Catholics called to "keep holy the Lord's Day"? (2192-95)

There are two ways in which Catholics "remember" the Lord's Day.

First, all Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. Sunday Mass is the high point of our week, and the source of our strength for the week to come. For that reason, it should be a joy and not a burden to fulfill this duty, which is one of the precepts of the Church. The deliberate failure to attend on Sunday is a serious sin.

Second, Catholics "are to abstain from those works and affairs which hinder the worship to be rendered to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the suitable relaxation of mind and body" (Code of Canon Law, canon 1247). Mass is only one hour of the day. This commandment is about refreshing our families and ourselves *all day*. It is a day of "protest" against the servitude of work and the worship of money (Catechism, no. 2172).

On Sundays we remember to give praise and thanksgiving to God the Father, from whom all blessings flow. We remember to join with our brothers and sisters in Christ for the celebration of the Eucharist, where we receive Jesus, the living bread from heaven. We also remember to set aside our labors as much as we are able, choosing instead activities that build us up spiritually and in every other way.

(10) What does my usual Sunday look like? How do I keep the day holy? What can I do to enhance my observance of the Lord's Day?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) What is the basis for the honor and respect that parents owe their children? (2214-15) How are children called to show respect toward their parents? (2216) If I'm a parent, how do I train my children to live this commandment?

The existence and nature of the family comes from God Himself; Human fatherhood is a participation in God's fatherhood (see Ephesians 3:14-15). God's fatherhood thus is the foundation for the honor that children owe to their parents. Respect for one's parents should reflect gratitude for the gift of life and love, and be shown through the children's docility and obedience.

(2) How would I summarize the parents' role in the faith formation of their children? (2221, 2223, 2225-26).

When it comes to their children's moral education and spiritual formation, the role of parents is primary and virtually irreplaceable. This Christian formation involves the creation of a home environment where the children may serenely grow in the human and theological virtues. Parents have both the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children as the "first heralds" of the Gospel, initiating the children at an early age into the life of faith.

While teachers, catechists, and pastors can play significant roles in faith formation, the Church says that "family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith."

All Christian parents are warmly encouraged to read CCC 2221-33 for a fuller presentation of their beautiful mission.

(3) Why is human life sacred? (2258) In what sense are we living in a "culture of death"? What can we do to defend and promote the dignity of human life in all its stages?

Human life is *sacred*, and for that reason it must be respected at every stage of one's life. From its beginning, human life involves the creative action of God, who created the world out of nothing and knit each of us in our mother's womb. We remain forever in a special relationship with the Creator. He is not only our beginning, but, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, He is the goal of every human life. In short, we were made to be with God for all eternity. Therefore, it is not lawful for anyone to directly kill an innocent human being. This is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator.

Answers will vary to the subsequent questions. For those wanting to learn more about the "Gospel of Life" as the antidote to our "culture of death," check out Blessed Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* ("Gospel of Life"), which may be viewed at the Vatican website (www.vatican.va).

(4) What is the sin of scandal? (2284) Why is it a sin against the Fifth Commandment? What can I do this week to build people up and lead them to Christ?

Many people don't fully understand the gravity of the word "scandal." We tend to think that scandal simply means a public, perhaps newsworthy sin. It actually goes much deeper. Scandal is an attitude or behavior that leads another to do evil. It's nothing short of being an accomplice to spiritual murder—hence the connection to the Fifth Commandment.

Do our thoughts, attitudes, words, or bad example actually turn people against the Church? Do we encourage sinful behavior? If so, we have committed the sin of scandal. Is it a serious sin? Here's what Our Lord said about it:

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." -- Matthew 18:6

(5) What is the virtue of chastity? (2337) What are some of the means of growing in chastity that are recommended by the Catechism? (2340) Why is chastity formation so challenging in our culture?

Chastity is a moral virtue, related to the cardinal virtue of temperance. It helps us to integrate our sexuality in a healthy, moral way, keeping in mind that we are bodily and spiritual beings.

Chastity is a grace as well as a lifelong project. The Catechism identifies these aids to chastity:

- fidelity to prayer
- self-knowledge
- penance and self-discipline
- obedience to God's commandments
- exercise of moral virtues, especially temperance
- chaste friendships
- flight from sexual temptations
- frequent reception of the sacraments

(6) When is it moral to regulate births? What are some immoral means of regulating births? (2368-69, 2399)

The Church is pro-life and sees in large families a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity (CCC 3773). At the same time, the Church encourages "responsible parenthood." In that context, couples with a "serious reason" (e.g., health, psychological, etc.) and not out of selfishness may consciously decide to put off or "space" the gift of children. However, this cannot be done through the use of an immoral means, such as contraception, which deliberately sterilizes the marital act. Couples wishing to postpone pregnancy are encouraged to use natural family planning ("NFP"), which not only is morally acceptable, but also an effective and healthy alternative to contraception.

(7) Is gambling a sin against the Seventh Commandment? Explain. (2413)

Gambling is not always and everywhere evil. Games of chance can be a legitimate form of entertainment so long as they are kept within the boundaries of virtuous conduct. Given the tragic consequences of habitual or excessive gambling, one should always exercise caution and vigilance in this area.

Since bingo and other forms of gambling are not intrinsically evil, they can be used as a means of raising money for Church-related charities. However, the promoters of church bingo must take extreme care in preserving a wholesome, virtuous environment for everyone involved.

(8) What is the Christian perspective on work? (2427-28) How does this shape my own attitude toward work?

Work was part of human life before the fall, and thus it is not in itself a punishment or curse. Since the fall, work has become burdensome (see Genesis 3:17-19), but it has also been redeemed by Christ.

Work enables us to participate in the ongoing work of *creation* as collaborators with God. In doing so, we become who God created us to be. We honor Him through our use of the gifts and talents He gave us, we provide support for ourselves and our family, and we help build up the human community.

Work also enables us to participate in the ongoing work of redemption. Work is a means of joyfully carrying our daily cross and being leaven to the world, both for our own sanctification and for the salvation of souls.

Because work is a God-given duty, it's also a *fundamental right*. Its dignity is not based on what is done or made, but because it is done by man for the good of man. For that reason, the Church champions the rights of workers, including access to work without unjust discrimination of any kind, just wages, the ability to organize in unions and even, when it can't be avoided and when necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit, strike.

The most important aspect of work is rest! On Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation, believers must refrain from work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body.

(9) Have I ever judged someone's thoughts, words, and actions and turned out to be wrong? How do I feel when I'm on the other end of that judgment? How does the Church encourage us to avoid rash judgment? (2477-78)

The Eighth Commandment calls us to resist rash judgment by being careful to interpret others' thoughts, words, and actions in the best possible light. Avoiding rash judgment in this manner involves practicing the Golden Rule ("Do to others as you would have them do to you"), as certainly we desire that others give us the benefit of the doubt.

CCC 2478 quotes St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, who explains it this way:

"Every good Christian ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to another's statement than to condemn it. But if he cannot do so, let him ask how the other understands it. And if the latter understands it badly, let the former correct him with love. If that does not suffice, let the Christian try all suitable ways to bring the other to a correct interpretation so that he may be saved."

(10) Has my study of the Catechism's treatment of the Ten Commandments deepened my understanding of Christian morality? What new insights on the Ten Commandments have I gained from this course?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) How does the Catechism describe prayer? (2559-65)

The Catechism, quoting the writings of St. John Damascene, defines prayer as “the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.” Christian prayer is inseparable from a personal relationship with the living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Catechism describes prayer as a gift from God, as a covenant between God and man, and as our communion in the divine life through the ministry of the Church.

(2) Is prayer for everybody? Why or why not? (2566-67)

Yes. Every human person was created by God to know, love, and serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him for all eternity in the life to come. Even after our human nature was tainted by the sin of Adam and Eve, we retained our desire for happiness, a desire that is satisfied by God alone.

While man is always in search of God, the greater truth is that God is always in search of us—going to the extreme of becoming one like us and redeeming us on the Cross. He calls all of us without exception to a dynamic, ever new relationship with Him through the mysterious encounter known as prayer.

(3) How is Abraham a model of prayer for all believers? (2570-72) Can I think of other noteworthy examples of prayer in the Old Testament?

Abraham is a model of prayer for all believers because he walked in the presence of God, and he heard and obeyed Him. “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3). He stepped out in faith.

Abraham’s prayer was noteworthy because he continued to trust God even in times of trial, such as when God asked him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Further, after having received in his own tent the visit of the Lord who confided His plan to him, Abraham dared to intercede for sinners with bold confidence.

Other “pray-ers” of note in the Old Testament include Moses, Hannah, David, and Elijah.

(4) Aside from the “responsorial psalm” at Mass, do I ever read or pray the Psalms? What are some of the characteristics of the Psalms? (2589)

The Psalms are considered the “masterwork” of prayer in the Old Testament. They have always been an integral part of Christian prayer as well—not only through private devotion, but also through the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Some recurring characteristics of the 150 Psalms include:

- simplicity and spontaneity
- human desire for God
- praising God for the wonders of creation and for every good gift
- seeking God’s assistance in times of difficulty or suffering
- God’s enduring love and fidelity

(5) Where did Jesus learn how to pray? (2599) Where and when did Jesus typically pray? (2600-02)

In one sense, Jesus learned to pray from His holy mother Mary and from the Jewish tradition in which He was dutifully raised. Even more, however, His prayer sprang from His relationship to the Father as the eternal Son of God, which was expressed through His holy humanity.

The Gospels frequently show us Jesus at prayer. Jesus prayed before all the decisive moments of His mission, including for 40 days in the desert before launching His public ministry. He frequently went off alone to pray, often at night.

Despite the busy-ness of His public ministry, He never neglected His priority of spending time with His Father. One could even say that His entire life was a prayer, because He was constantly in communion with His Father.

(6) How does Jesus teach His followers to pray? (2607, 2621)

Most importantly, Jesus teaches us the dispositions we need in order to pray well. He exhorts us to purify our hearts, that we may seek first the kingdom of God and forgive our enemies. He teaches us to be bold and persevering in our prayer, which sometimes leads us beyond what we presently feel or understand. He also instructs us to be vigilant, lest we fall prey to temptations or distraction.

Jesus also gives us “inside information” as to the content of our prayer, as He left us what is known as the Lord’s Prayer, or “Our Father,” which we will discuss in more detail in a subsequent session.

(7) List three parables on prayer that are singled out in the Catechism. What does Our Lord teach us in these parables? (2613)

The Catechism mentions these parables found in St. Luke's Gospel:

- The parable of "the importunate friend" (Luke 11:5-13) invites us to pray with a sense of urgency.
- The parable of "the importunate widow" (Luke 18:1-8) exhorts us to pray without ceasing and to be patient in our prayer.
- The parable of "the Pharisee and the tax collector" (Luke 18:9-14) reminds us of the necessity of praying with humility.

(8) How do we know that God hears our prayers? (2615-16)

Our prayer is heard when it is united in faith with the prayer of Jesus. In Him, Christian prayer becomes a communion of love with the Father. The Church recommends the "Jesus prayer" as a continual prayer to help us grow closer to Jesus: "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." With Christ and in His name, we can present our petitions to our heavenly Father and be heard: "Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

(9) What do the following episodes from the Gospels teach us about the Blessed Virgin Mary's prayer?

We know that Our Lady pondered the events of Christ's life in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51). We learn much about Our Lady's prayer in these episodes from the Gospels:

(a) *Annunciation* (Luke 1:26-38): Mary's "fiat" ("let it be done") is an offering of her whole being to God, as she faithfully cooperates with the Father's plan for her.

(b) *Wedding at Cana* (2:1-12): Mary intercedes for the wedding party—and for us.

(c) *Crucifixion* (John 19:17-37): Mary cooperates in the bringing forth of the Church from the pierced side of her slain Son. She is the New Eve, the mother not only of St. John (John 19:26-27), but of all those who come to believe in her Son.

(d) *Visitation* (Luke 1:39-56): The Canticle of Mary (or "Magnificat") in verses 46-55 is the song of Mary and, in a real way, the song of the Church. This richly biblical prayer gives God all the glory. It is filled with joyful thanksgiving as well as solicitude for the poor.

(10) In this session, we have surveyed the topic of prayer in the Old Testament and in the life of Christ. Did I gain any new insights on prayer in this session? What people in my life have been models of prayer for me?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) How does Acts 2:42 describe the prayer of the first Christian community? (2624) How is this verse reflected in the prayer of the Church today? In my prayer?

In the verse from Acts, we learn that the first disciples “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers.” The prayer of the Church is rooted in the faith of the apostles, which is lived in charity, and nourished by the Eucharist.

(2) What are some of the sources or wellsprings of prayer? (2660, 62) How can I more fully drink of this “living water”?

Wellsprings of prayer include:

- the *Word of God*, especially meditation on Scripture, which gives us “the surpassing knowledge” of Christ (Philippians 3:8);
- the *Liturgy of the Church* that proclaims, makes present, and brings to us the mystery of salvation;
- the *theological virtues* of faith, hope, and charity; and
- *everyday situations*, because we encounter God in the present moment, what Scripture calls “today.”

(3) How do we have access to the Father? (2664) Why is it important to pray “in Jesus’ name”? (2666-68) Who draws us to call upon Jesus’ name? (2670)

We have access to the Father when we pray in the name of Jesus. He says, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (John 15:16). That’s why the Church’s liturgical prayers typically end with “through Christ our Lord,” “we ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord,” or similar wording.

When we pray “Jesus,” we are invoking Him and asking Him to be with us. We should frequently call on the name of Jesus, such as in this short prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners.”

“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Holy Spirit beckons us to pray, teaches us how to do it, and gently urges us to call upon the name of the Lord.

(4) Mary is sometimes called the *hodigitria*, which means “she who shows the way.” How does this title relate to prayer? (2674) What are the two principal movements of prayer to Mary? (2675)

Mary is the *hodigitria*, who ever points us toward her Son. Just as the star led the Magi to the infant Jesus, so Mary is our star, who leads us to Jesus, the only mediator between God and man.

Because of Mary's docility to the Holy Spirit, the Church has always prayed to and with Mary. This prayer includes (a) "magnifying" the Lord, recognizing the "great things" He had done for Mary and for the Church (see Luke 1:47-49); and (b) offering our petitions and needs to Mary our mother, asking her to pray for us.

(5) Christian tradition has provided us with three basic expressions of the life prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, contemplation. What do they have in common? (2721) How are they distinct from one another? (2722-24)

All three types of prayer involve the raising of the heart and mind to God, and they all entail a spirit of recollection. Vocal prayer associates the body and voice with the interior prayer of the heart. The Our Father is the most perfect vocal prayer, as it was taught by Christ Himself.

Meditation is prayer that actively engages the thoughts, imagination, and emotions of the prayer, and is a step toward more intimate union with God. Contemplation involves a simple gaze upon Jesus in silence. It is a grace that brings us to intense union with God.

(6) How is prayer a spiritual battle? Who is the enemy? (2725)

While prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit, it also calls forth a response from us. Because of our fallen nature and the allures of the world, we commonly experience within ourselves "opposition" to our commitment to prayer. So, with St. Paul (see Ephesians 6:10-18) we are determined to do battle against our sinful tendencies and against Satan, who seeks the ruin of our souls. That explains why the Church on earth is sometimes called the "Church militant."

The Church encourages us to pray to St. Michael the Archangel, asking his prayers and angelic protection:

**Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our protection against the malice and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;
and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host -
by the power of God -
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.**

(7) How should we deal with distractions in our prayer? (2729) What personal quality do we need to remain sober and alert in our prayer? (2730)

When we are distracted at prayer, we should not become discouraged and stop. Nor should we follow every fleeting thought or distraction that comes our way. How would a friend feel if, as he or she was talking to me, I allowed my mind to wander and didn't pay attention to what was said? That would be very rude. How much worse would it be if I were to treat God Himself that way?

Rather, when distracted we should gently and lovingly redirect our hearts to God. Because we are attached to many things, we can be easily distracted and so it's a continual struggle to remain centered and focused in prayer. For this reason, the Catechism exhorts the faithful to be *vigilant*, to foster a "sobriety of heart" that proactively counteracts our tendency to become distracted.

(8) What are the two principal temptations in prayer? (2732-33) What might be some ways to combat these temptations and become more fervent in our prayer?

The two principal temptations in prayer are lack of faith and acedia. A lack of faith often presents itself in the way that we give everything else priority over our prayer. We don't really believe that apart from the Lord we can do nothing (see John 15:5). We can overcome this temptation by asking the Lord to increase our faith (see Luke 17:5), by zealously guarding time set aside for prayer, and by frequently seeking the grace of the sacraments.

Acedia is a sadness we experience when we lack the resolve and fortitude to seek the spiritual goods God wishes to give us. We see this temptation at work when we become lazy and lax in our prayer and religious observances, and when we become careless about guarding our heart.

(9) Scripture says that we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). How is that possible? (2742-43) What is the alternative? (2744)

Prayer and Christian life are inseparable, as both are the fruit of the Trinitarian love that has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (see Romans 5:5). Prayer is not a separate compartment of our lives, but rather it must infuse and enliven all our daily activities. Further, *love of God*, as reflected in our prayer, must not be set in opposition to *love of neighbor*, as reflected in our Christian lives of charity.

There's an old Christian adage (sometimes attributed to St. Augustine, other times to St. Ignatius of Loyola) that's instructive on this point: "Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you."

(10) John 17:1-26 is called the priestly prayer of Jesus, which He prayed at the Last Supper when His "hour" came. (2746) Slowly, meditatively read John 17. What strikes me the most about this prayer? Why?

Answers will vary.

Responses

(1) Why is the Our Father sometimes called the "Lord's Prayer"? (2759, 2765) Why does the Catechism refer to it as "the quintessential prayer of the Church"? (2776)

The Our Father is also called the "Lord's Prayer" because the Lord Jesus Himself taught His disciples this prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4). Because of its source, the Our Father is the Christian prayer *par excellence*. Not surprisingly, the faithful recite this prayer at Mass, in the celebration of the sacraments, and during the Liturgy of the Hours. It is also highly recommended for personal prayer and devotion, and is one of the principal prayers of the Rosary.

(2) Why do we begin this prayer by invoking God as "our Father"? (2798, 2801) What thoughts, feelings, or images come to mind when I think of God as "our Father"?

Our Lord revealed the Father to us. By identifying ourselves with Christ, we share in His sonship. As Christians we truly have become God's children by adoption (see 1 John 3:1; Galatians 4:4-7), so in the Holy Spirit we can confidently approach God as Father. Even more, through our relationship with Christ we become part of the Church, of the "family of God." Through our participation in the life of God through grace, we truly become brothers and sisters in Christ by means of bonds that are even stronger than flesh and blood relationships.

(3) What is the basic structure of the Lord's Prayer? (2803-05) Have I thought of the prayer in those terms before?

After addressing God as "Our Father," we then proceed to make a series of seven petitions, three in praise of God and four that seek divine assistance:

- i. Hallowed be thy name.
- ii. Thy kingdom come.
- iii. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
- iv. Give us this day our daily bread.
- v. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
- vi. Lead us not into temptation.
- vii. But deliver us from evil.

(4) What do we mean when we say, "hallowed be thy name"? (2807) How do I "hallow" God's name? (See 2813-15 for assistance!)

"To hallow" means to make holy. Only God can make someone or something holy in the strictest sense. We hallow God's name by recognizing it as holy, and by treating His name with utmost reverence and respect. Embodying this petition in our own lives is how Christians proactively live out the Second Commandment ("Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain").

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" – Psalm 8:1

(5) To what does "thy kingdom come" refer? (2818) How is this petition granted in our lives? (2821)

Christ is our true King, and where He is, there is His kingdom. While the kingdom is present in seed form here on earth, this petition refers primarily to Our Lord's triumphant return at the end of time, when the Church will reach its perfection (see also CCC 769). In the meantime, we "await the blessed hope" and pray that the Kingdom will grow in our own hearts and in our world through our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The "value system" of this Kingdom is reflected in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).

"Come, Lord Jesus!" – Revelation 22:20

(6) Why do we pray for God's will to be done? (2860)

By this petition, we pray that our own wills may be united to God's, that we would want (for us and for others) what God wants. We know that God's will is that all people may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (1 Timothy 2:4). For that reason, we pray that God's saving plan may be fully realized in the world and certainly within our own lives. We actively discern "what is the will of God" (Romans 12:2) and seek divine assistance for the "steadfastness to do it" (Hebrews 10:36).

(7) What is our daily bread? (2837, 2861)

When we say the Lord's Prayer, we ask our heavenly Father to provide our daily sustenance, our daily bread. This petition increases our awareness of God's goodness, and it opens us to be mindful of the needs of others.

God not only provides for our material needs, but our spiritual ones as well. He feeds us with His Word, as "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). He also gives us the Eucharist, the life-giving bread from heaven that nourishes us on our journey home to our Father. Our Lord tells us that whoever eats His flesh will have eternal life (John 6:54). For that reason, St. Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St. John, would call the Eucharist the "medicine of immortality."

(8) Why do we say, “forgive us our trespasses”? (2839) Why does petition go on to add, “as we forgive . . .”? (2842)

Even though we have been baptized and bear the name “Christian,” we recognize our sinfulness. We are all in continual need of divine mercy. Yet we are confident that when we turn to God with contrite hearts, mercy will be ours, because Christ has already won the victory!

As we beg for mercy, we also acknowledge that learning to forgive others prepares our hearts to receive this blessing. As we open ourselves to the gift of the Holy Spirit, we become disposed to forgive others.

Through grace we participate in the life of God. We are called to become more like Christ, so we are called to be ambassadors of mercy (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). That’s the call that goes out to all of us, and the Our Father makes clear that we are forgiven only *as* we forgive others (see the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35).

(9) What’s the difference between a trial and a temptation? (2847) What are we implying when we say, “Lead us not into temptation?” (2848-49)

The Holy Spirit helps us to distinguish between a *trial*, which makes us grow in holiness, and a *temptation*, which leads to sin and death. In addition, it’s very important to distinguish between being tempted, which is not a sin, and consenting to temptation, which indeed is a sin.

This petition implies a “decision of the heart” to remain faithful to God and to allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit.

We face many challenges in the Christian life. We desperately need the Holy Spirit’s assistance in discerning right from wrong, so that we do not choose a path that leads to sin. Despite our vigilance, temptations inevitably come. In this petition, we ask our heavenly Father for the grace to resist them and persevere to the end.

(10) What been the place of the Our Father in my own prayer life? What insights have I drawn from this session that will help me to go deeper in my prayer?

Answers will vary.