

# **Know, Love, and Live Our Catholic Faith**

## **A Preparation for Confirmation**

Based on the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church

Candidate Version  
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## **Acknowledgement**

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# Faith

## Definition of Faith

Faith is believing in something of which we do not have proof. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of *things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1; Catechism 146).

When we buy a can of beans at the grocery store, we do not have proof that the can contains beans, because we cannot see inside it. It is possible that the factory mislabeled the can. Even though we do not have proof until we open the can at home, we do have a *good reason* to believe that the contents match the label because the label has never been wrong in the past. This is a good example of faith. On the other hand, if none of the cans in the grocery store were labeled (e.g., a flood washed all the labels away), and we randomly chose an unlabeled can believing it contained beans, this would be foolishness, not faith.

On matters of faith we do not have *proof*, but we should have a *good reason* to believe they are true. This program attempts to provide the *reasons* behind our Catholic faith.

## Characteristics of Faith

### Faith is Certain

Faith is more certain than human knowledge (Catechism 157).

Since God created everything, He knows everything, and He cannot be wrong. Our opinions can be wrong, but God cannot be wrong, and He cannot lie because He created the truth.

Personal beliefs often contradict what faith teaches, but our human reason is imperfect and subject to error.

Often, God's messages go against what society practices (Matthew 5:43). We must believe in what God teaches us because God is without error and cannot lie.

People often state their personal beliefs with a lot of conviction, but personal beliefs and opinions do not have the power to change reality. For example, just because a person does not believe in Purgatory does not mean that they won't find themselves there after death.

We are given the opportunity to love God through faith alone, without actually seeing Him. We only get this chance during this life, so take advantage of it.

Faith exists only while we are on this earth. Once in Heaven, our personal understanding will no longer depend on faith. Everyone will see things exactly as they are. There are no religious debates in Heaven.

### Freedom of Faith

Nobody is forced to embrace the faith against his will; we are free to choose. Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. We are free to believe what we want. God does not force us to believe in Him (Catechism 160).

Through this freedom of choice, God allows humans, through their own *free will*, to return His love. If coercion were part of God's plan, it would not be true love on our part. For example, is there a difference between being *forced* to marry someone versus *choosing* to marry them because you love them? This is the reason God will not violate our *free will* and *force* us to love Him. We will discuss this in more detail later.

Words are one thing, but we *show* God how much we love him by the choices we make. When we make choices that hurt God or other people (sin), we are not returning God's love.

Life is full of choices. Christ teaches us that God's ways are not the same as the ways of the world. To choose God often means going against popular opinion.

### **Faith Seeks Understanding to Resolve Doubts**

"I believe in order to understand, and I understand to believe better" (St Augustine; Catechism 158).

When we try to learn about God and what He has revealed, we *open our eyes* and come to understand and believe what God teaches us, not the world's convictions, we *open our hearts* to grow to love God more. Therefore this program attempts to explain what Catholics believe and why.

Feed your faith, and your doubts will starve to death. It is OK to have doubts and question something that is not understood, as long as one honestly seeks to increase their faith. The pursuit of understanding is a worthy endeavor, but we should be careful not to criticize what we do not understand.

### **Faith and Science**

Science is the study of God's creation. There are no discrepancies between true science and faith, for it is God Himself who made the secrets of nature what they are. God cannot contradict Himself (Catechism 159). Science and various forms of research can be the wonderful quest to understand God's beautiful creation.

Scientists often view their research as a quest of discovery into God's wonderful creation. There once was a man who was so taken by the music of Mozart that he came to the realization that this beautiful music could only have come from God. His admiration of this beautiful music led him to the personal realization that there must be a God. He then decided to choose a profession that would allow him to devote his life to discovering more about God's beautiful creation. That man's name was Albert Einstein.

### **Necessity of Faith (Catechism 161)**

Faith is necessary for salvation. The Lord himself affirms in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Catechism 183).

We are eternal creatures. We will never cease to exist. If we compared our "total" lifetime to all the sand on all the beaches of the world, then our life here on earth would be but one grain of sand in our whole existence. But it is a very important grain of sand,

as this short life will define how we will spend the next trillion years and then all of eternity.

In this life, everything counts; everything matters: every thought, word and deed, during every waking moment. Things done for love will last forever and can be taken with you into your life after death. Things done out of selfishness will perish.

Many adults are focused on their retirement. Which retirement do you think is more important to focus on, the twenty-year retirement here on Earth or the infinite retirement in Heaven?

Being an atheist is a no-win proposition. If the atheist is right and there is no God, then he will never find out, but if the atheist is wrong, he will regret it forever. Believing in God is a no-lose proposition. If the believer is right, he will enjoy the rewards forever, but if the believer is wrong, he will never know it.

## **Faith and the Church**

Faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone (Catechism 166). The Church is a community of believers. An important component of this confirmation program (this faith journey) is for the candidates to decide for themselves if they want to become a more active member in the Catholic community.

Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior help of the Holy Spirit (Catechism 179). We should pray to the Holy Spirit to increase our faith, because we cannot do it solely through our own intellect. That is why praying to the Holy Spirit is such an important part of this program.

The Church faithfully guards the faith, which was delivered to the saints and hands on the Apostles' profession of faith from generation to generation (Catechism 171). One does not need to be a theologian to be a good Catholic. Over the last 2,000 years the Catholic Church has had thousands of theologians, priests, bishops, and popes who have devoted their lives to developing our beautiful Catholic faith. We have been given a rich gift, and through this program we will hopefully grow to understand this gift on a more personal level.

We have a personal assurance from Jesus that the Church's teachings have the backing of Heaven. "Whatever you hold bound on earth shall be bound in Heaven" (Matthew 18:18). Said another way, the Church's teachings on faith and morals cannot lead us astray. We will discuss this in more detail in subsequent chapters.

## **Spreading the Faith**

Through Confirmation we are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence we are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed (Catechism 1285).

There are many ways to spread the faith, but one way is to follow these two steps:

1. Focus on growing our own relationship with God.
2. Be the best son/daughter, father/mother, husband/wife, and friend/neighbor that we can be.

Setting a daily example of love can convert more people around us to God than any discussion on religion. People will unknowingly be drawn to your virtues. When they find out that God is at the center of your life, they will begin to understand and hopefully want to develop a relationship with Him as well.

### **Faith as a Virtue**

The three theological virtues are faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13).

How to live faith as a virtue:

1. Freely *commit* your entire self to God.
2. Seek to know and *do God's will*.
3. *Bear witness* to your faith and spread it.
4. Faith apart from *works* is dead. It is not only what we believe that is important, but also what we do. (Catechism 1814-1816)

Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, and faith looks up (anon).

# God

## CREED:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth**

### One God

God gave himself the name "I AM WHO AM" or YHWH (Yahweh) (*Exodus 3:14*). The divine name is mysterious, just as God is a mystery. It is at once a name revealed and the refusal of a name (Catechism 206).

Some of God's Characteristics (Catechism 213-218):

"If you understood Him, He would not be God" (*St Augustine; Catechism 230*). Our minds cannot truly comprehend God's infinite and eternal characteristics, but there are some characteristics of God that we can describe in human terms.

1. God is *perfection*.

Unless we can create the whole universe out of nothing, then perhaps giving advice to God is not such a wise idea.

2. God is *without origin and without end*.

No one created God; He has always been here. There was never anything that came before God; He has no beginning and no end. God is the only being who has always existed.

There is only one being, God, who can claim not to have been created and who was responsible for creating everything else. No one or nothing else is worthy of our worship and praise.

3. All creatures *receive all that they are and have from Him*.

With the exception of sin, everything that exists came from God. We have God to thank for all that is good in this world.

4. God is *slow to anger*.

We are lucky to have such a good and compassionate God. God is more patient and loving than the best human parent. He loves us when we are good, and He loves us when we are bad.

5. God is *truth*.

God's words cannot deceive. That is why one can abandon oneself in full trust. God cannot lie, because He is Truth.

6. God is *love*.

God is never cruel. God loves us no matter how many mistakes we make. He is always ready to forgive us. God never turns away from us. He can live anywhere in the universe, and He chooses your heart.

## **God Is Our Ultimate Goal** (Catechism 222-229)

Faith in God leads us to turn to Him alone as our ultimate goal, neither to prefer anything to Him, nor to substitute anything for Him. God put us in the world to know, love, and serve Him, and so to come to paradise (Catechism 1721).

True happiness is not found in riches or wellbeing, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love (Catechism 1723).

Cars are built to run on gasoline. Even if we wanted to operate our car on something cheaper, such as water, we cannot. No wishful thinking on our part will change the fact that the car needs gas to run. In much the same way, God designed human beings to run on Him alone. If we try to replace God with other things in this world, we will not find lasting contentment.

There is an empty place in our heart that can only be filled with God. People often spend their lives trying to fill this hole with everything but God, to no avail. There is a certain loneliness that we will experience until we fill this hole in our heart with God.

A Prayer from St Nicholas of Flue:

My Lord and my God,  
Take from me everything that distances me from you.  
Give me everything that brings me closer to you.  
Detach me from myself to give my all to you.

## **Taking Time for God**

A quote from Thomas Merton's "No Man Is an Island":

If we have no silence, God is not heard in our music.  
If we have no rest, God does not bless our work.  
If we twist our lives out of shape in order to fill every corner of them with action and experience, God will silently withdraw from our hearts and leave us empty.

Perhaps the most valuable thing we can give our children is our time (*Brian Tracy*). When we spend quality time with our children and spouse, we grow close to them and show them how much we love them. In much the same way we need to spend time with God in prayer to develop a relationship with Him. (See the chapter on prayer below.)

## **The Father**

No one is without a family; we are all part of God's family.

1. God made us His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ (Catechism 294; Eph 1:5-6).
2. Jesus taught us to call God our Father (Matt 6:9).
3. From the cross Jesus gave us Mary to be our mother (John 19:26).
4. By becoming human, Jesus became our Brother (Heb 2:14).

Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father, who takes care of His children's smallest needs (Catechism 305).

"Don't worry about things - food, drink and clothes...Your heavenly Father already knows perfectly well what you need, and he will give them to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to. . . .So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time" (Matthew 6:25-34).

## **The Almighty**

Webster's definition is "all powerful."

Hold it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible for God (Catechism 274).

Many miracles defy the laws of nature, but God is far above the ordinary laws of physics. They are subject to Him, as is the rest of His creation.

## **Suffering**

Faith in God the Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil or suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping suffering, but through His almighty power, God can make good come out of every event in life (Catechism 272).

Here are a few examples:

### **Suffering and sacrifice are ways to *show* God how much we love Him.**

Jesus willingly endured intense suffering on the cross to show God and man how much He loves them. Through Christ's suffering, He proved that there is nothing that can separate Him from God. Jesus also proved His love for mankind by never showing the slightest contempt, even though we caused Him to suffer. Jesus' plea, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," is an appeal for all mankind, including me and you (Luke 23:34).

We may also have crosses enter our lives that will put our love for God to the test. There is one way to recognize a cross: *a cross is never fair*. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him deny himself and pick up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Examples of crosses include:

- A child dies of cancer.
- A man is confined to a wheel chair after being hit by a drunk driver.
- Jesus, who never committed even the smallest offence against anyone, was tortured to death for crimes that He did not commit.

Make no mistake, these unfair situations (crosses) are defining moments in our life. They will test us to the very core of our existence to see how much we really love God. They can become our finest hour and our greatest accomplishment while on earth.

Sorrow does not come from God, but He allows it. If we allow Him, God will take what might appear to be our ruin and turn it into our salvation. Each time we "pick up our own cross," we should rejoice at taking part in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. On that day, we may feel defeated, but in the end we shall stand gloriously before God alongside all those who have picked up their crosses and receive our exceedingly great reward.

### **Through suffering and hardship we can grow.**

"It's not what happens to you that is important, but rather it's what you do about it that matters" (*Aldous Huxley*).

A Creed for Those Who Have Suffered (Roy Campanella):

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.  
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do great things.  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men.  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing I asked for – but everything I had hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among men, most richly blessed!

"There is no strength where there is no struggle" (anon).

It is similar to the locker room celebration after a big sports victory. The players who are covered in sweat and mud from the competition are the ones who experience the greatest joy and satisfaction. The second string players, who watched the game from the sideline, don't experience the same sense of accomplishment. Do you want to live your life on the sideline? God is calling us onto the playing field to live life to the fullest.

### **Suffering and hardship can increase our trust in God.**

Meet life's disappointments with the comfort that God is doing what is best for us, even if we cannot see the logic at the time. We must trust that God knows what's best for us.

Story:

A little boy is telling his Grandma how "everything" is going wrong: school, problems with friends, etc.

Meanwhile, Grandma is baking a cake. She asks her grandson if he would like a snack, which, of course, he does.

"Here, have some cooking oil."

"Yuck!" says the boy.

"Would you like a couple raw eggs?"

"Gross, Grandma!"

"Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?"

"Grandma, those are all yucky!"

Grandma replies, "Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves, but when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake!"

Grandma told her grandson, "God works the same way." Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!

(The story's origin is unknown.).

We cannot judge a good event from a bad event at a perspective of less than 1,000 years. In other words, we will never see the full picture while here on earth. Only when we are in Heaven will we be able to see all the reasons behind God's plan. For example, an early death may have saved that person from a fate far worse than death.

When you are going through a difficult time, try to think what this situation will mean to you a 1,000 years from now. If you can maintain a long-term perspective like this, it can help you rise above the difficult situation and not fall into despair.

Next time you are going through a difficult time, try to accept it by telling God, "Even though I cannot see the logic now, I trust that this is the best thing that can happen to me at this time." See how much better this will make you feel.

### **Bad events often cause people to turn to God.**

When things are going fine, it is easy to neglect our relationship with God. Some people only turn to God when they need help in a difficult or tragic situation. Although this may not be ideal, it is better than never turning to God.

After spending one second in Heaven, all of life's struggles will seem worth it. Keep focused on eternity, and it will be much easier to keep things in perspective.

### **Creator of Heaven and Earth**

Our sun belongs to the Milky Way galaxy, which has a hundred billion stars. There are at least hundred million galaxies like ours. In fact, there are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on all the beaches of the world.

There seem to be two possible ways in which the universe came to exist: by chance or by design. In the early 1980s, two scientists calculated the odds that random shuffling of amino acids could have produced life. They found that the odds were one chance in  $10^{40,000}$  (an almost unimaginable number). Both scientists had been atheists, but they came to believe through their scientific work that a creator exists. To claim that life came about by chance is like claiming that a runaway truck moving through a garbage dump could produce the Mona Lisa (*Issues of Faith and Morals*, 23)!

God is the architect of the laws of physics. God created the laws of nature, but He is not subject to them. The various fields of science are man's meager attempt to understand God's handiwork. After hundreds of years of scientific research, scientists are still left

with more unanswered questions than answers. God's creation is magnificent and complex. Our human brains will never comprehend it all.

Only God can call something into existence out of nothing (Catechism 318). There are no scientific laws that explain how matter came into existence. Science only seeks to understand how God's creation behaves. Even if the universe were created by a Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago, someone needed to create the thing that went "bang."

Evidence suggests that God fashioned life on earth through an evolutionary process. But whether He did it that way or not, God still must be acknowledged as its Maker. The ultimate answer does not involve a conflict between scientific and religious truth, for God is the author of both (*Catholic Replies* 38).

The human soul cannot emerge from an evolutionary process because it is of spiritual nature. Modern science cannot measure or track our souls, but when our soul leaves our body, we leave our body.

Even man's modern technology falls short of replicating some of the most basic capabilities of nature that have been in existence for millions of years.

Many religions worship God, the Creator of the universe. Though He may go by different names, we are all worshiping the same God, the only infinite Being whom no one created and who has always existed.

# Jesus

## CREED:

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord**

### Jesus

In Hebrew, the name "Jesus" means "God saves": "For he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21; Catechism 452).

### Christ

"Christ" comes from the Hebrew word "messiah," which means "anointed." Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit as our priest, prophet, and king (Catechism 346).

### His Only Son

Jesus is the only Son of God. To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Catechism 454).

### Lord

"Lord" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name YHWH (Yahweh), which is the name by which God revealed himself to Moses. The title of Lord indicates divinity. Lord is the name given to God and to Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself. To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is God (Catechism 446, 455).

The Old Testament is full of prophecies about the Messiah, and Jesus fulfilled them. Here are a few examples:

He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matthew. 1:22-23).

His throne would be eternal (Dan 2:44, 7:14; Luke 1:33).

He would be called Emmanuel (Isa. 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-6).

He would be honored by wise men (Ps 72:10; Isa 60:3; Matthew 2:11).

Palm Sunday (Zech 9:9; Matthew 21:4-5).

His own people would reject him (Isa 53:3; John 1:11).

He would be betrayed by his friend for thirty pieces of silver (Ps 41:9; Zech 11:12; Matthew 26:14-16, 21-25).

He would be scourged (Isa 50:6; Matthew 26:67, 27:26).

He would be given vinegar to drink (Ps 69:21; Matthew 27:34).

He would be crucified (Ps 22:16; Zech 12:10; Mark 15:25).

They would gamble for his clothes (Ps 22:18; Luke 23:34).

He would be surrounded and ridiculed (Ps 22:7; Matthew 27:39-44).

He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60).

He would rise from the dead (Ps 16:10; Matthew 28:2-7).

### True God and True Man

Jesus was conceived through the union of God and the Virgin Mary. God is Jesus' true biological Father (Matthew 1:18-23). Joseph was Jesus' stepfather.

Jesus Christ is true God and true man; for this reason He is the one and only mediator between God and man. Jesus Christ possesses two complete natures, one divine and the other human. He is the Man-God. No other prophet in any other religion makes this claim (Catechism 480-483). As a man, Jesus worships God, just like we do. Because He is God, we worship Jesus.

Because He is God, Jesus' teachings on faith and morals have a unique authority, giving us certainty where human intelligence could only indicate probabilities (*Faith and Morals* 14-15).

We can have 100% confidence that what Jesus told us is true. Jesus is God, so He cannot lie. He is Truth. We can believe what Jesus says without question. As we will discuss in detail later, our faith is firmly rooted in Jesus' word. As discussed in Chapter 1, on matters of faith we do not have proof, but we should have a good reason to believe. The fact that our faith comes directly from Jesus is a good reason to believe it. People who disagree with God may want to remember that human logic can be wrong, but God is never wrong.

It is because Jesus is divine that we have faith in Him. It is because He is human that we identify with Him, and through that humanity understand ourselves (*Teen Catechism* 53).

### **Why did God Come Down to Live on Earth?** (Catechism 456-460)

#### 1. To save us by reconciling us with God

Jesus came to take away our sins. Jesus is perfect, and He gave up everything for God and us by making the perfect sacrifice on the cross. We are not perfect, but Jesus allows us to benefit from His sacrifice. We are lucky God did not leave us on our own, as we would fall short of perfection.

Even though we are not perfect and do not necessarily lay down our lives for God like Jesus did, we still get to be with God in paradise, because Jesus' sacrifice paid for our sins. Jesus allows us to clothe ourselves in His merits. That is why we must first be washed clean with the "blood of the Lamb" before entering Heaven.

#### 2. So that we might know God's love

God so loved the world that He willingly sacrificed His only son. Imagine a parent being asked to do the same with their child. Abraham was spared such a sacrifice.

#### 3. To be our model of holiness

God leads by example; He is not an armchair quarterback. Jesus does not ask us to endure anything that He has not already endured Himself, including rejection, betrayal, poverty, and mental and physical pain. Jesus showed us how to live a holy life. See "The Way of Christ" below.

#### 4. To make us partakers of the divine nature

The Son of God became Son of Man so that we can become son and daughters of God. Jesus is the Son of God who became a man and our Brother (Catechism 469). We can now call God our Father, Mary our Mother, and Jesus our Brother.

### **The Way of Christ**

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus gives us the way to live life to the fullest. The Way of Christ leads to life, while a contrary way leads to destruction (Catechism 1696; Matthew 7:13; Deut 30:15-20). Everyone needs a purpose in life, beyond selfishness, something to live for (Matthew 7:24; *Faith and Morals* 15).

The Way of Christ can be summarized in the Beatitudes and the Virtues (Catechism 1697).

The key to happiness is not found in changing or controlling our surroundings, but rather involves controlling how we respond to life's situations. We will never be able to control life's ups and downs, but we can control how we respond to them. If we respond in the Way of Christ, we will find internal peace, contentment, fulfillment, and happiness no matter what bad things are going on around us.

Those who focus on things of this world to find happiness rarely find lasting contentment. Indeed, a man who loves money never has money enough. No matter how much effort we put into it, we are not always going to win, not always going to be successful. Things are not always going to go the way we want. Jesus offers a recipe for true happiness by focusing on what is going on inside us (Beatitudes and Virtues), which is something we can control.

Christ gives us a recipe to live life to the fullest. But the Way of Christ is an ironic message, and it is hard to understand until we actually try it. So we have to give it a try to experience what it is all about. Challenge yourself at least to try what is described in the Beatitudes and Virtues.

### **Beatitudes**

(Luke 6:20-23 and Matthew 5:1-12).

The Beatitudes are at the heart of the Christian message. The greatest joy in life is that of living a truly excellent life. Through the Beatitudes God calls each Christian to greatness. Those who live in the excellent ways the Beatitudes command will be happy (*Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine* 49-51).

The meaning of each Beatitude goes beyond what is summarized below, but here is a partial explanation of each.

#### **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.**

- Be generous and giving towards others.
- Do not put money or material possessions above everything else.
- Do not seek popularity.

- Live for other people.
- To give away all that one has and is means entering a blessed way of living like that of the Lord our teacher.
- Remember that your heart is where your treasure is (Luke 12:34).
- *Opposite behavior*: greedy, selfish, or materialistic.

**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

- This does not mean tears shed out of feeling sorry for ourselves, but rather from showing compassion for our brothers and sisters in need.
- It means being compassionate towards the suffering of others.
- It involves letting others know when we are hurting without embarrassment. We can weep like Jesus did.
- *Opposite behavior*: insensitive to others' needs or too proud to acknowledge pain.

**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

- Even though Christ was the most powerful man to have ever walked the face of this earth, He only exerted His power to help others.
- The meek seek nothing for themselves.
- The meek do not seek power.
- The meek have patience for the poor and weak.
- We should not always need to be in control, but rather hand over control of our life to God.
- It also means to be tender and gentle and not always needing to win.
- *Opposite behavior*: power hungry, overly competitive, domineering personality.

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.**

- Jesus calls us to forgive our enemies, to turn the other cheek. If they steal your jacket, give them your shirt.
- This beatitude also calls us to seek God's will for our life.
- *Opposite behavior*: to hold grudges and not forgive.

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.**

- Just like Jesus, do not be judgmental or condemning.
- Reject no one.
- Love the sinner, not the sin.
- Remove the board from your own eye before telling your brother to remove the splinter from his.
- Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
- *Opposite behavior*: judgmental and critical of others.

**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

- The pure in heart do not seek the dishonest pleasures of the world. With all their hearts they seek what is best, God.
- The pure in heart see the Lord Himself in everyone around them.
- It is a call to be completely honest with God and others.

- Don't put on a false front for others.
- A pure life is marked with openness and integrity.
- *Opposite behavior*: To seek pleasure rather than God or a fake personality.

**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.**

- The Lord's greeting, "Peace be with you," speaks of this.
- It means to have peace of mind and heart, peace with others and God.
- Internal peace and happiness are what most people are searching for, whether they realize it or not.
- Seek to resolve conflict and diffuse anger. Help others to resolve their conflicts and differences.
- *Opposite behavior*: to cause conflict or controversy.

**Blessed are those who are persecuted because they are good, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers - wonderful. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a tremendous reward awaits you in Heaven (Matthew 5:3-12).**

- Do what is right even if you are mistreated because of your goodness.
- Have such a great love that you bear your cross gladly.
- Be willing to stand alone for what is right.
- Take criticism and teasing without reacting defensively or feeling self-pity.
- *Opposite behavior*: to follow others to the point of not being your own person, easily succumbing to peer pressure.

**Virtues**

Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but also to give the best of himself. The virtuous man is he who freely practices good (Catechism 1803-04).

**Theological Virtues**

The theological virtues relate directly to God. The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love dispose us to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity (Catechism 1812; 1 Cor 13:13).

**Faith**

By faith man freely commits his entire self to God (Catechism 1814). By faith we believe in God and believe all that he has revealed to us and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief (Catechism 1842).

The disciple of Christ must also profess the faith, publicly bear witness to it and spread it (Catechism 1816). Christ told us that witness to the faith is necessary for salvation. "If anyone publicly acknowledges me as his friend, I will openly acknowledge him as my friend before my Father in Heaven. But if anyone publicly denies me, I will openly deny him before my Father in Heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

But "faith apart from works is dead." When it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ (Catechism 1815). Having faith alone is not enough; we need to "walk the talk." We need to love and help others (works).

## Hope

Through hope we desire eternal life in Heaven, placing our trust in Christ's promises and not relying on our own strength, but on the help of the Holy Spirit (Catechism 1817).

Hope keeps man from despair. It sustains him during times of abandonment. It opens up his heart in expectation of eternal life (Catechism 1818).

Hope strengthens us in the struggles of this life. It gives us joy even under trial. For in the end, those who hope in God will not be disappointed. Keep your focus on eternity and realize that our life on this earth is a temporary affair, but we will live forever (Catechism 1820).

## Love (Charity)

Jesus makes love (charity) the New Commandment (John 13:34, 15:12). By charity we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves (Catechism 1844).

Christ asks us to love as He does, even our enemies, even the most difficult neighbor, even the least of our brothers – children and the poor (Catechism 1825).

Charity is superior to all the virtues. "There are three things that remain -- faith, hope and charity -- and the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor 13:13). "If I don't have charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:1-3).

If we turn away from evil for the:

- Fear of punishment, we are acting like slaves.
- Enticement of rewards, we are acting like mercenaries.
- Sake of good itself and love of God, we are children of God (Catechism 1826).

Every time we quietly do an act of charity here on earth, God will increase our reward in Heaven. "Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in Heaven where they will never lose their value, and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in Heaven, your heart will be there too" (Matthew 6:19-21). Love is the only thing we can take with us from this earth into eternal life.

The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy (Catechism 1829).

## Human Virtues

The human virtues can be grouped around the four cardinal virtues: temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence (Catechism 1834).

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart:

Through *temperance* our love is uncorrupted.

Through *fortitude* no misfortune can disturb it.

Through *justice* it obeys only God.

Through *prudence* it is not surprised by deceit. (*Catechism 1809*).

**Temperance** moderates the attraction of the pleasures of the senses. It keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person maintains healthy discretion (*Catechism 1809*).

**Fortitude** ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of good. It strengthens us to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles. It enables us to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials (*Catechism 1808*).

**Justice** consists in the firm and constant will to give God and neighbor their due. Justice disposes us to respect the rights of each other and promote equity (*Catechism 1807*).

**Prudence** helps us discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means for achieving it. "The prudent man looks where he is going." Prudence guides the judgment of our conscience. It helps us apply moral principles without error (*Catechism 1806*).

Human virtues are acquired by education, deliberate acts, and perseverance. With God's help, they forge character. It is not easy for man wounded by sin to maintain a good moral balance (*Catechism 1810-11*).

In addition to the Beatitudes and Virtues, the Way of Christ involves forgiveness, grace, and the Holy Spirit (*Catechism 1697*). These will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

# Holy Spirit

**CREED:**  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit.**

## **Holy Spirit, Our Counselor**

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, which means "counselor" (Catechism 692).

The more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit" (Catechism 736). The more we try to do it on our own, the more we shut out the Holy Spirit.

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. The Holy Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness (Catechism 733 and 749).

Prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, we find the Apostles scared and hiding behind locked doors. When Jesus was arrested, they all ran away to save their lives, except John. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles boldly ventured into public to preach the gospel, no longer fearing for their lives. In fact, these men boldly spread Christianity to the whole known world before their death, and all but John bravely died a martyr's death.

Nothing is impossible for God, so if we let the Holy Spirit into our lives nothing is impossible. If the Holy Spirit spread Christianity around the whole world starting with just twelve men, what do you think He can do with millions of faithful Catholics?

Through the Holy Spirit, God can live within each one of us. The Holy Spirit is God's presence on earth living in our hearts. Through the Holy Spirit, we experience God in an intimate and very personal way. The Spirit will be with us forever. The Spirit will teach us everything. The Holy Spirit will lead us to all truth (Catechism 729).

## **Conversion**

Conversion is not necessarily about becoming a different person, but rather it is about becoming a "better you." The Holy Spirit can help us become a better person than we could be on our own. That does not mean we have to change our personality. God made all of us to be who we are, and He does not make mistakes. He made everyone different, so don't try to change who you are. God loves who you are, or He would not have made you that way.

Self-improvement efforts, such as losing weight and exercising, are often short-lived. But through the Holy Spirit, our conversion experience can be lifelong, because He will provide the ingredients for a lasting and permanent improvement. We only need to ask for His help.

The Sacrament of Confirmation should signify a true conversion experience. One should not receive this sacrament because one's parents expect it, or because one's friends are doing it, or even just because they attended a confirmation class. One should only receive this sacrament if they have converted their heart, mind, soul and body to God. If this conversion experience has not taken place, then the person should wait to receive this sacrament when they are truly ready.

## **Holy Spirit and Love**

Love is made possible because we have received power from the Holy Spirit (Catechism 735). St. Paul gives us a clear description of love (1 Cor 13:4-8):

Love is very patient and kind,  
Never jealous or envious,  
Never boastful or proud,  
Never haughty or selfish or rude.  
Love does not demand its own way.  
It is not irritable or touchy.  
It does not hold grudges and will hardly notice when others do it wrong.  
It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.  
If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost.

Love is not always easy. We are not always going to be successful at it. Have you ever noticed how we are sometimes nicer to strangers than we are to our own family members? Casual acquaintances only involve being polite, which is easy, while relationships with our family require love, which can be hard.

Those close to us see the best and the worst of us. What a valuable gift it is to have family and friends who see our faults and failings and still love us for who we are. That valuable gift is called love. Do we love our family and friends this unconditionally?

- Do we find it easier to be patient with our family or friends?
- Is it always easy to be kind to people, especially when we are in a bad mood?
- What types of things can make us envious or jealous?
- What do we think about people who are boastful or proud?
- Why does love involve denying ourselves and being unselfish?
- Are we more often rude to family or strangers?
- Should mature adults demand their own way?
- What things cause us to become irritable?
- Are you the type of person who holds a grudge, or do you quickly forgive and forget?
- Name some examples of when it might be difficult to be loyal or stand by our friends.

Just like the Apostles, who were faced with a seemingly impossible task—to convert the world with only twelve men—we can feel overwhelmed. Luckily all we need to do is call upon the Holy Spirit for help. The Holy Spirit will carry the burden, if we let Him. The next two sections describe how the Holy Spirit helps us.

## **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit helps us by giving us seven gifts (Catechism 1831). The seven gifts can be divided into three groups: knowing, being and doing. Making the sign of the cross can help us remember the gifts. We touch our head for knowing, our heart for being, and our shoulders for doing.

These gifts can be a great help for us in life. God is not asking us to do all the work by ourselves. He wants to help us. "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." But we have

to invite the Holy Spirit into our lives to make ourselves available to His gifts. We also have to turn over control to Him, and this can be hard for some people. Don't try to do it all by yourself. Don't make things harder than they have to be. Let our All Powerful God take care of things for you.

## **Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

### **Knowing**

1. *Knowledge*: knowing the facts (academic or life skills)
2. *Wisdom*: apply your knowledge to make good decisions
3. *Understanding*: seeing the true meaning behind a situation
4. *Counsel*: providing advice on what needs to be said/done

### **Being**

5. *Piety* (reverence): having a deep love for God and His creation
6. *Fear of the Lord*: showing respect for God and fear of hurting the ones we love

### **Doing**

7. *Fortitude* (courage): enduring difficult times and standing up for what is right

## **Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are perfections (personality traits) that the Holy Spirit forms within us, if we ask Him into our lives (Catechism 1832). This process is subtle and almost unnoticeable at times, but if you look back on your life with the Holy Spirit, you can see how He has formed you into a more beautiful person. You may also find that others will gravitate to you, attracted by these fruits.

1. *Charity*: loving our neighbor
2. *Joy*: happiness, delight
3. *Peace*: calm serenity
4. *Patience*: calm endurance
5. *Kindness*: sympathetic, gentle
6. *Goodness*: morally sound, virtuous
7. *Generosity*: willing to give, unselfish
8. *Gentleness*: mild, moderate
9. *Faithfulness*: unquestioning belief in God
10. *Modesty*: showing humility, not vain
11. *Self-control*: control of our desires

## **Holy Spirit and Prayer**

Do not become overwhelmed by trying to make it through life on your own. Simply call upon the Holy Spirit every day to come into your life. There are numerous prayers to the Holy Spirit. It would help to memorize at least one.

## Two Prayers to the Holy Spirit:

Spirit of God, grant me:

The gift of **understanding** to see the world through your eyes,

The gift of **counsel** to make difficult decisions,

The gifts of **knowledge** and **wisdom** to use my mind to know you and to love you,

The gift of **fortitude** to have the courage to live in the faith despite difficulties

The gift of **piety** to be able to express my special love and commitment to you,

And the right kind of **fear** that makes me pause to wonder and revere God's Love. Amen

Come Holy Spirit

Fill the hearts of your faithful.

Make the fire of your love burn within them.

Send forth your spirit,

And there shall be a new creation,

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray,

O God you have instructed the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit.

Grant that through that same Holy Spirit

We may be always truly wise

And rejoice in his consolation. Amen.

The Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray. The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes (Catechism 741, 2650).

## Holy Spirit of the Trinity

It is impossible to see God's Son without the Holy Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son. The Holy Spirit and Jesus are essential to developing a relationship with God (Catechism 683).

Similar to the fact that Jesus is True God and true man, the Holy Trinity can be a difficult concept to grasp: One God in Three Persons. Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three different "persons," yet One God. It is impossible for our human brains to grasp this mystery.

Through the Holy Spirit we are:

- Restored to paradise and led back to the Kingdom of Heaven
- Adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Our Father"
- Allowed to share in Christ's grace and given a share in eternal glory (Catechism 73)

## Holy Spirit and Faith

No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit. To be in touch with Christ the Holy Spirit must first have touched us. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us (Catechism 693).

## **Holy Spirit and the Church**

The Church is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has endowed the Church with holiness. The Church is the place "where the Spirit flourishes" (Catechism 737, 749). The Church derives its holiness from the Holy Spirit, not from man. Because of the Holy Spirit, the Church is the sinless one made up of sinners (Catechism 867).

The Holy Spirit is the principal author of Sacred Scripture (Catechism 304).

## **Holy Spirit and the Sacraments**

Sacrament of Baptism gives the baptized the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Catechism 1266).

Sacrament of Confirmation increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us; it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly (Catechism 1285).

Sacrament of Reconciliation is based on faith in the Holy Spirit. "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Catechism 976).

Anointing of the Sick gives particular gifts of the Holy Spirit: strength, peace, and courage to overcome the illness. This gift of the Holy Spirit strengthens against the temptation of discouragement and anguish (Catechism 1520).

## **Creed**

At the core of our Creed is the belief in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, as discussed in the previous chapters, but the remainder of the Apostles' Creed is also important and completes the foundation of our Catholic faith.

The fundamental articles of our faith have remained unchanged since Christ and the Apostles established our Catholic Church 2,000 years ago.

### **Apostles' Creed ~ 100 AD**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
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.  
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.

### **Conceived by the Holy Spirit and Born of the Virgin Mary**

Jesus was conceived through the union of God and Mary. God is Jesus' biological Father (Matthew 1:18-23).

Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, is the new Adam. The first man, Adam, was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man, Jesus, is from Heaven. For as by one man's disobedience (the Original Sin) many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience (Jesus' sacrifice on the cross) many will be made righteous (Catechism 504, 615).

Similarly, Mary is the new Eve. The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience (Catechism 494). By the grace of God, Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long (Catechism 493).

The first Adam and Eve committed the Original Sin. The New Adam (Jesus) and New Eve (Mary) are both without sin, and so Jesus and Mary usher in a new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit (Catechism 505). They opened the door for mankind to have a deeper relationship with God. We can now call God our Father (Lord's Prayer), Mary our mother, and Jesus our brother.

## **Suffered under Pontius Pilot, Was Crucified, Died, and Was Buried**

Jesus clearly told his followers ahead of time that:

- *He would be crucified:* Matthew 16:21, 17:12, 20:19; Mark 8:31, 9:12, 10:33-34; Luke 9:22, 18:33; John 3:14, 8:28, 10:17-18, 26:2
- *He would rise from the dead:* Matthew 12:38-40, 16:4, 16:21, 17:12, 17:23, 20:19; Mark 8:31, 9:9, 9:31, 10:34; Luke 9:22, 11:29-30, 17:25, 18:33; John 2:19-22, 12:23, 12:32
- *He would ascend into Heaven:* John 1:50-51
- *He would be betrayed:* Matthew 17:22, 20:18, 26:21, 26:2; Mark 9:31, 14:18; Luke 9:44, 22:21; John 6:70-71, 13:18-33
- *His Church would not die:* Matthew 16:18-19

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. “The greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

We were ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot (Catechism 602). Our sins caused Jesus to have to suffer the torment of the cross. Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father. Christ’s sacrifice is the source of eternal salvation (Catechism 598, 615-616).

Compare Jesus’ sacrifice to the way the Jew’s atoned for their sins in Jesus’ time.

### **Jewish Passover Sacrifice:**

A family traveled to the temple in Jerusalem once a year to celebrate Passover. They purchased an unblemished lamb for sacrifice. At the temple the priest would kill the lamb and sprinkle its blood onto the altar to atone for the family’s sins. The family would complete the sacrifice by eating the body of the lamb during the Passover supper.

### **Jesus’ Sacrifice:**

Similarly the high priests killed Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover feast. Jesus was God’s perfect unblemished Lamb who was sacrificed on the cross to atone for all our sins, once and for all. The Apostles ate his body during the Passover meal, the Last Supper, when he instituted the Eucharist. We too partake in Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice, in a very real way, every time we consume Jesus’ body during the mass. In fact, we refer to it as the *Sacrifice of the Mass*.

## **Descended into Hell**

“Hell” here means the abode of the dead, *Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek. These are just people who were deprived of the vision of God while waiting Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to open the gates of Heaven. Jesus went down to the realm of the dead (Purgatory) to open Heaven’s gates for the just who had died before him (Catechism 633, 637). Jesus did this during the time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer. It does not matter whether one lived before, during, or after Jesus; we all benefit from His sacrifice. Jesus’ sacrifice was for all people of all ages (Catechism 605).

## **On the Third Day He Rose from the Dead**

The Apostles did not believe the claim that Jesus rose from the dead until they saw it for themselves. So it is not true to say the Apostles made up the story of the resurrection (Catechism 643).

By means of touch and sharing of meals, Jesus establishes that He is not a ghost (Catechism 645; Luke 24:38-41; John 21:12).

Jesus' risen body still bears the fatal wounds of the crucifixion, yet He lives on, proving His victory over death (Catechism 645; John 20:27).

In His risen state, Jesus appeared and disappeared out of thin air. This proves there is an invisible realm beyond the confines of this earth and that Jesus has power over it (Catechism 645; John 20: 19 and 26).

During the forty days between Easter and the Ascension, Jesus appeared, ate, drank, and taught His disciples. He appeared to many people during that time.

If Christ had not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and our faith is in vain (1 Cor 15:14). Perhaps at the time, people thought that Christ's teachings and influence would come to an end with his execution, and perhaps they would have if Jesus were a mere man. The religious leaders who put Him to death thought they could put an end to Jesus' "new movement." Jesus' Apostles and disciples thought their beloved leader had been defeated and all was lost.

But the resurrection turned Jesus' death into victory! Jesus proves He is untouchable by mere human beings. He proved that His kingdom and power are far above the authority of any government ("for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory for ever and ever"). Jesus had not been defeated, but rather established that He is Lord over all of creation, something much bigger than even the Roman Empire (John 18:36). His church did not die, but rather was born on Easter morning. That is why Easter is the greatest Christian holiday.

The resurrection provides definitive proof of Christ's divinity (Catechism 652-653). This is a claim that no other religion or prophet makes. Jesus is not just a holy man. He is the Man-God!

## **He Ascended into Heaven and Is Seated at the Right Hand of God the Father**

So the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

On this occasion, Jesus did not vanish into thin air. He rose up into the sky in plain view of many people (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9).

Jesus is Lord of all. Christ's ascension into Heaven signifies His participation in God's power and authority. He possesses all power in Heaven and earth. He is Lord over the whole cosmos and of history (Catechism 668).

Jesus is our Mediator with God. Jesus having entered the sanctuary of Heaven, once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as our mediator (Catechism 667).

## **He Will Come to Judge the Living and the Dead**

Every person will face two judgments.

*Particular Judgment:* Immediately after death Christ will judge each one of us on how well we loved and served God and our neighbor while on earth. We will immediately go to either Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell.

*Final Judgment:* At some point in the future, all of mankind will be judged at one time. We will all be judged on the basis of how we responded to those in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46). The final judgment will not change the particular judgment.

The following will take place at the Final Judgment.

1. The truth on each person's relationship with God will be laid bare.
2. All the good we did or failed to do during our entire life will be revealed.
3. We will be joined with our glorified body just prior to this.
4. We will know the meaning of the whole work of creation.
5. Only Heaven and Hell will remain; Earth and Purgatory will pass away.  
(*Catholic Replies* 169).

Those in Purgatory are guaranteed to make it to Heaven one day.

We will go through a period of time where we will not have a body (the time between the Particular Judgment and the Final Judgment), where we will exist as a spirit. At the Final Judgment, we will receive our glorified body. No one is sure what this glorified body will resemble, but it will most likely be better than the one we currently have on earth.

## **I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church**

Nicene Creed: "I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church."

### **One**

The Church acknowledges *one* Lord, confesses *one* faith, is born of *one* Baptism, forms only *one* Body, and is given life by *one* Spirit for the sake of *one* hope (Eph 4:3-5; Catechism 866).

The Church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head, and the Holy Spirit is its soul. In the unity of this body, there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are linked to one another (Catechism 805-809; 1 Cor 12:27).

Even though there is one Church, it is made up of many different kinds of people. We are not asked to give up our individuality to be Catholic. God does not make junk; we all bring our own unique gifts that can benefit the church (Eph 4:16). Although one Church, the Catholic religion does not try to force everyone into one mold.

## **Holy**

The Holy Spirit gives the Church life.

The Church is a sinless one made up of sinners. The Church derives its holiness from God, not from man (Catechism 867).

It is not a prerequisite that we are perfect (without sin) to attend church. If that were the case, then the Church would have only two adult members in its entire history, Jesus and Mary. One of the reasons we come to church is to acknowledge that we are not perfect and are in need of God's healing.

Not all of the church leaders in the past have been holy. The mere fact that the Church has survived the corruption of some of its members proves that the Church's holiness is not subject to its constituents. If the survival of the Church were left up to the works of man, it would have perished long ago, but since it comes from God, man cannot destroy it. In general we find that institutions that are dependent on man to exist (governments, societies, etc.), have a relatively short life in a historical context.

## **Catholic**

Webster's defines "catholic" as "universal or all-inclusive."

The Church is sent to *all* peoples; she encompasses *all* times. The Church contains *all* the means of salvation (Catechism 868).

Catholics celebrate mass in practically every corner of the world. In fact, each day Catholics all celebrate the same mass, the only difference being the intercessions and homily. Travel to any Roman Catholic Church in the world, no matter how remote, and you will find the same faith and the same seven sacraments.

## **Apostolic**

The Church governs through the successors to Peter and the Apostles (Romans 13: 1-2). The Church is indestructible, and infallibly upholds the truth (Catechism 869).

Christ chose the Apostles. Christ entrusted specific authority to Peter, our first pope (Catechism 880-883). Christ entrusted authority to "bind and loose" to all the Apostles, our first bishops. The Apostles handed down their teaching authority to other bishops. This has continued through history, such that there is an unbroken line of popes and bishops that goes back to Christ himself.

The Apostles' Creed, which was written ~100 AD, is our current day creed. The key articles of our faith have not changed since the Church was founded by Christ.

"[Peter] you are 'Rock', and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"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 shall be loosed in Heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

## **Communion of Saints**

The church is made up of:

1. Pilgrims on Earth (us).
2. Dead who are being purified in Purgatory
3. Blessed in Heaven (Catechism 962).

The "intercession of the saints" means that they can help us from Heaven. "Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life" (St Dominic).

"Communion with the dead" means that we can pray for those in Purgatory that they may be loosed from their sins and go to Heaven (Catechism 958).

## **Forgiveness of Sins**

Jesus bestowed the power to forgive man's sins to the Apostles. "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). We believe Jesus' word that if the Church forgives our sins, then they are forgiven.

We receive forgiveness for our sins in the following sacraments:

*Baptism:* Original Sin and all other sins

*Reconciliation:* mortal and venial sins committed after baptism

*Eucharist:* venial sins and strengthens us to combat temptation

*Anointing of the Sick:* if unable to obtain it through penance

## **The Resurrection of the Body**

This means not only that our soul will live on after death, but that even our mortal body will come to life again. We will participate in a resurrection similar to Jesus (Catechism 990, 994).

At death the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body just before the Final Judgment. How God will give us new bodies is a mystery, but He gave us our mortal bodies, so why can't He give us eternal glorified bodies (Catechism 997, 1000)?

We do not believe in reincarnation. "It is appointed that men die once, and after death be judged" (Hebrews 9:27). How can a soul be reunited to numerous bodies?

## **Life Everlasting**

We are eternal creatures and will live forever. We will never cease to exist.

Make no mistake, our time here on earth is a pivotal point in our existence. Whether we spend all of eternity in pain or ecstasy is determined by how we live our short life here on this earth.

## **Amen**

When we say "Amen," it means, "I believe."

## Mary, the Mother of God

### Honoring Mary

Why do we honor Mary? One explanation can be found by answering two questions.

1. *Did Jesus obey the Ten Commandments?* Yes. Jesus obeyed the fourth commandment, which is to honor our father and mother.
2. *As Christians, is it our objective to imitate Christ?* Yes. The Catholic Church did not first honor Mary; Jesus Christ beat us to it 2,000 years ago.

When we honor Mary and ask for her help, we are not worshipping her as God.

Many Christian denominations do not understand, and even criticize, our relationship with Mary. If we so readily honor our fellow man here on earth, why would it be difficult to honor the Mother of God?

### Jesus Gave Us Mary to Be Our Mother

From the cross, Jesus gave Mary to the whole Church, which was represented by John, the Apostle, at the foot of the cross. The fourth commandment calls us to honor our father and mother. Mary is our heavenly mother (John 19:26-27; *Catholic Replies* 145).

The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of "Mother of God" (Catechism 971). Honoring Mary has been part of the Christian religion from the very beginning.

### Mary Our Advocate

Mary is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix (Catechism 969). As any good mother looks after her children, Mary is looking after us.

Just as Jesus did not deny his mother's request at the wedding in Cana, we have faith that Mary's intercession on our behalf would not be denied by her Son. Could there be a more influential advocate to have on our side than Jesus' mother?

Mary's whole mission in her life was to bring people to Jesus. Mary never draws attention to herself, only to Christ (*Teen Catechism* 73).

We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in Heaven to exercise her maternal role on our behalf (Catechism 975). Prayer is how we communicate with Mary and ask her for help. Just as we learned to ask the Holy Spirit for help, we can also pray to Mary and ask for her help.

### Mary Our Role Model

By her complete adherence to the Father's will, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity (Catechism 967). If we strive to love her Son, as Mary did, then we will most assuredly develop our relationship with Jesus.

At the Annunciation, Mary said “yes” to God (Luke 1:38). Mary dedicated her whole life to God. Should we not strive to do the same, no matter what path we take in this life?

### **The Immaculate Conception**

The Immaculate Conception does not refer to the conception of Jesus, through the union of God and Mary. It also does not mean that Mary’s father was God. Her parents Anne and Joachim conceived Mary through normal marital relations.

The Immaculate Conception means that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived and born without the stain of Original Sin (Catechism 491).

Original Sin is contracted, not committed; it is a state, not an act (Catechism 404). As children of Adam and Eve, we are all born with Original Sin. Original Sin creates in us a natural inclination to sin. As a result we have to continually struggle with our human nature to avoid sinning. For us baptism erases original sin, but the inclination to sin remains (Catechism 405).

Through the Immaculate Conception, Mary was born without Original Sin and the associated inclination to sin. So by the grace of God, Mary was able to do what would be virtually impossible for us: remain free of every personal sin her whole life (Catechism 493).

Does it make sense that God would be born into this world from anyone short of "The Perfect Woman"? Why is it hard to believe that God can create the perfect woman to be his mother? Would you expect anything less?

### **The Assumption**

When the course of Mary’s earthly life was finished, she was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory and exalted by the Lord as queen over all things (Catechism 966).

St. Gregory of Tours wrote about the Assumption in the sixth century. Pope Pius XII declared it to be a dogma divinely revealed in 1950. The reasoning:

Since Mary was free from all sin, and the corruption of the body is a consequence of sin, she did not suffer the decay of the grave. Furthermore, since it was Mary’s body that brought the Savior into the world, her body should share in His bodily glorification (*Catholic Replies* 146).

St. Peter the Apostle, our first pope, is buried in the St. Peter’s Cathedral at the Vatican. St. John the Apostle’s tomb is still intact in a church in Ephesus. Even though her contemporary’s resting places are well known, nowhere will you find mention of a tomb for Mary.

Jesus and Mary are not the only two people to be reunited with their bodies in Heaven. The Old Testament tells the story of Elijah the Prophet’s being taken up to Heaven body and soul in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). After the Final Judgment, we all will be joined with our glorified body. Why is it hard to believe that the Mother of God should share the same honor that we will all enjoy one day?

## **Mary Ever-Virgin**

The Catholic faith believes that Mary remained ever-virgin. She never had sexual relations with any man during her entire life (Catechism 499; St. Ambrose at the Council of Capua in 392).

Even though the church has professed this since at least 392 AD, this of course cannot be proven. But what is to gain by claiming it is not true?

A virgin dedicates not only their life to God, but also their body, in effect dedicating their whole self to God. Many men and women have done this throughout history. Priests and sisters still do it today. Is it too difficult to believe that Mary the Mother of God made such a commitment?

The Bible makes several references to Jesus' brothers, which often causes confusion to the claim that Mary was ever-virgin. In Hebrew and Aramaic, there were no specific words for "cousin," so the word "brother" was sometimes used for brother, cousin, or other relatives. We know, for example, that the James and Joseph mentioned in Mark 6:3 and Mathew 13:55 as the brothers of Jesus were in fact the sons of Mary, the wife of Clopas (Matt 27:56). Since the Gospels also tell us that Mary of Clopas was Jesus' aunt (John 19:25), then her sons were Jesus' cousins (*Catholic Replies* 141).

James, Judas, Simon, and Joseph were Jesus' cousins, the sons of the other Mary. In fact, James and Judas were both Apostles, James the Less and Judas Thaddeus (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55; Matthew 27:56, 28:1; John 19:25; Catechism 500).

## **The Hail Mary**

The first four lines of the Hail Mary come directly from the Bible. The last line is a prayer of petition asking for Mary's help.

Hail Mary Full of Grace (Luke 1:28).  
The Lord is with thee (Luke 1:30),  
Blessed are you amongst women (Luke 1:42, 46),  
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus (Luke 1:43).

Holy Mary Mother of God,  
Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death (petition).

The Hail Mary is a powerful prayer. Why not pray it every day to bring your heavenly mother into your life?

## **The Rosary**

The Rosary is a way to spend approximately fifteen minutes in prayer. The combination of the beads and the repetitive prayers help drown out the distractions of our busy lives and wandering minds. They help us to focus our mind and heart on spending time in prayerful union with Heaven. We will discuss prayer in another chapter.

# Free Will, Sin, Forgiveness, and Grace

## Free Will

Men as intelligent and free creatures have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their own free choice. God grants humans not only their existence, but also the dignity and freedom to act on their own (Catechism 306, 311). We would all agree that freedom is a good thing, but we must keep in mind that with freedom comes responsibility and accountability for our actions.

God created man to be a rational being who can initiate and control his own actions, so that he might of his own accord seek his Creator. Of all visible creatures, only man is able to know and love his Creator. He alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life (Catechism 356, 1730). Animals cannot sin, but they also do not have the opportunity to love God the way that we can.

It is only through free will that man is able to return God's love. It is for this reason that God does not violate our free will. God does not coerce us into loving him. God does not control our lives; we do. God is the most powerful being in creation, but He is powerless against our free will.

No one can force you to have a relationship with God, not your parents, not your confirmation teacher, not your priest. If it happens, it is because you choose to make it happen.

Even though we are imperfect creatures, we can truly return God's perfect and infinite love by loving Him through faith (without actually seeing Him) and by choosing Him through our own free will. The choices and decisions we make in life are primary ways that we show God our love.

There is always the possibility of choosing between good and evil, between growing in perfection and failing. The choice to do evil leads to "the slavery of sin." The more one chooses good, the freer one becomes (Catechism 1731, 1733).

## Conscience

Conscience is man's most inner core. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths (Catechism 1795). Just as an atom has a core that is made up of a neutron and proton, we have a core that is made up of a "good voice" and a "bad voice" (i.e., the analogy of a little angel on one shoulder and devil sitting on the other),

We form a good conscience by understanding God's word through faith and prayer and putting it into practice. If we do not do this, the conscience can remain in ignorance and make erroneous judgments (Catechism 1801-02).

We must work to build a good conscience; otherwise we can rationalize our actions to ourselves, even if they are wrong. When we rationalize, we make excuses and do not accept responsibility for our actions.

*"I took the iPod, but that kid is rich, and he can easily buy another."*

*"I did drugs, but so did everyone else at the party."*

The Ten Commandments clearly define what is right and wrong. If we break one of the Ten Commandments, then it is wrong, no matter what our excuse might be. We know we are rationalizing when we break one of the Ten Commandments, and then we do not admit that we did something wrong or do not accept responsibility for our actions. Later we will discuss how “admitting that we did something wrong” is the first step to forgiveness.

The conversion process is like opening the drapes in a dark dusty room. The more we open the drapes and let in light, the more we can see the dust that has settled on the furniture. The more progress we make towards building a good conscience, the more it can feel like we are “backing up.” The less we rationalize, the more dust we see in ourselves. Do not be disheartened by these normal growing pains.

When we admit our faults and take responsibility for them, we are being honest with ourselves and with God. We can begin to accept and love ourselves as we are. By realizing that we do not have to be perfect, our self-esteem can actually improve. God does not expect us to be perfect, but He does expect us to seek forgiveness. The only sin that cannot be forgiven is the one that we refuse to seek forgiveness for. We can shed ourselves of any guilt by completing the four steps to forgiveness (discussed in detail later).

## **Original Sin**

The Original Sin was basically that man preferred himself to God and wanted to be like God.

As a result of Adam and Eve’s Original Sin, the following happened:

- By one man’s disobedience all men were made sinners.
- Union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions.
- Harmony with creation is broken.
- Death makes its entrance into human history.
- The world is virtually inundated by sin.
- In his heart, man is drawn towards what is wrong and has an inclination to sin (Catechism 397-401).

For us, Original Sin is contracted, not committed: a state, not an act (Catechism 404). As children of Adam and Eve, we are all born with Original Sin. Original Sin creates in us an inclination to sin. As a result, we humans have to struggle continually with our human nature to avoid sinning. Baptism erases original sin, but the inclination to sin remains (Catechism 405).

God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. “O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!” Christ’s inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those that the Original Sin took away (Catechism 412).

## **Sin**

Do you think it is right to do harm to another person? If you do not, then you understand the basic concept of sin. Every one of the Ten Commandments defines something that either hurts God, another person, or ourselves.

Sin is an offense against God; it is disobedience against God and turns our hearts away from God (Catechism 1440, 1850). Sin is an abuse of the free will that God gives to created persons, so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another (Catechism 387, 1853).

It is doubtful that many people wake up in the morning and say, "I feel like being evil today." Rather, when we sin, it is usually because we want something (usually for ourselves) and rationalize that it is OK because of whatever excuse we have.

God never turns away from anyone. It is we who turn away from God through sin. When we sin, we move away from God, but God never goes anywhere. He is always there, waiting for us to return His love. When we repent, we return to God.

The more we persist in sin without repentance (returning to God), the further we move away from God. The further we move away, the harder it is to see/feel Him and the more difficult it becomes to build a good conscience. The closer we are to God, the easier it is to see our sin. The further we are from God, the easier it is to rationalize our actions.

### **Gravity of Sin**

There is a difference between accidentally hurting someone versus deliberately causing them serious harm. This is basically the difference between venial and mortal sin. All sins are not the same. Some sins are a minor offense, while other sins seriously hurt someone.

*Venial Sin*: minor sins that offend God or other people but do not deprive us of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, or eternal happiness (Catechism 1855, 1862). Venial sins are not of a grave matter or are done without full knowledge or consent.

When we commit venial sins, we move away from God some, but do not completely shut Him out of our life.

Almost every human being has committed venial sins. Thus we are all in need of forgiveness.

*Mortal Sin* is a grave violation of God's law, and it turns man away from God.

For a sin to be Mortal it must be:

1. *A grave matter*: specified by the Ten Commandments. The gravity of sins varies. Murder is graver than theft. It also takes into account who is wronged. Sin against a family member is graver than that against a stranger. A mortal sin *seriously* hurts another.
2. *Committed with full knowledge*: the person knows ahead of time that it will seriously hurt another.
3. *Deliberate consent*: even though they know it is wrong ahead of time, the sinner makes a conscious decision to do it anyway.

A mortal sin is not a minor offense; it seriously hurts another person. Also, we have to know ahead of time that it is wrong and will cause serious harm (premeditated), and

even though we know it is wrong, we choose to do it anyway. We cannot commit a mortal sin by accident.

An offence against any one of the Ten Commandments may (or may not) be a mortal sin, depending on the gravity of the offence and the person's knowledge/intentions. Sin committed through hatred, by deliberate choice of evil, is the gravest (Catechism 1857-1860).

When we commit a mortal sin, we separate ourselves from God, completely shutting Him out of our life.

If unforgiven, mortal sin can deprive us of eternal happiness (Catechism 1874). God respects our free will, so He will not keep us from turning away from Him (sin). If we consciously choose to live without God, then we may very well get what we ask for: to spend the rest of eternity in a place where God does not exist, Hell.

### **Temptation**

Temptation is a thought about doing something wrong. Temptation makes a wrong choice look good.

If we say "no" to temptation, then there is no sin. In order for a sin to exist, we must not only think about making a wrong choice, we must actually do it.

Saying "no" to temptation is one way to *show* God how much we love Him. By definition a temptation is something we really want to do. So if we deny ourselves a temptation, then we prove to God that He means more to us than anything.

### **Forgiveness**

The fundamental Christian message is of love and forgiveness. So this next section is very important to understand. We cannot have healthy relationships with other people or God without love and forgiveness.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). To receive God's mercy, we must admit our faults (Catechism 1847). It is a sign of maturity when we can admit our faults and take responsibility for our actions.

"Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven" (Mark 3:29; Matthew 12:32; Luke 12:10). The Church defines this to mean that anyone who deliberately refuses to accept God's mercy by repenting rejects the forgiveness of his sins and salvation (Catechism 1864). God respects our free will, so if we deny God's forgiveness, how can He forgive us?

## Steps to Forgiveness

The Catholic Religion is not a guide on how to become perfect. Lucky for us, God does not require that we never make a mistake. We do, however, need to:

1. *Admit when we do something wrong and be sorry for our offenses.*
2. *Verbally apologize and ask for forgiveness.* Take responsibility for our actions and ask for forgiveness from those we hurt (God, other people, and ourselves).
3. *Receive forgiveness from those we hurt,* assuming they are willing to forgive us. God is always ready to accept our apology. We must also forgive others when they apologize to us.
4. *Right the wrong:* seek to remedy the damage we caused.

These four fundamental steps to forgiveness provide the basis for a healthy relationship with God, other people, and ourselves. We need not only to memorize these four fundamental steps, but also to put them into practice. It is not always easy to apologize or accept another person's apology when we are still mad at them. The more we do it, the easier it becomes.

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

As will be discussed in more detail later, the Sacrament of Reconciliation follows these same four steps of forgiveness:

1. Confess our sins: *Admit when we do something wrong and to be sorry for our sin.* Through confession man takes responsibility for his sins and thereby opens himself again to God (Catechism 1455).
2. Do an act of contrition: *Verbally apologize and ask for forgiveness,* detesting the sin committed and resolving not to do it again (Catechism 1451).
3. Seek absolution: *Receive forgiveness.* Priests, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins. They accept our apology on God's behalf (Catechism 1461).
4. Do penance: *Right the wrong.* Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. To recover full spiritual health we must do something to make amends for the sin (Catechism 1459).

When we hurt someone, is it enough to be sorry on the inside, or do we need to apologize verbally to make things right? In much the same way, the Sacrament of Reconciliation serves as our verbal apology to God. Verbal apologies are not easy, but once you learn that it will make you feel better, they become easier to do.

## Forgiving Others

We must not only ask for forgiveness, but also forgive those who have hurt us, even if that person does not apologize to us.

No one is perfect, and we often hurt those close to us. It is very unlikely that people living together will never hurt one another. We must continually forgive our loved ones to maintain a healthy relationship.

"I forgave the prisoner and set him free, only to find out that that prisoner was me" (anon).

Sometimes it is difficult to forgive one another, but as long as it is left undone, people on both sides carry around a weight in their hearts. When we forgive one another, there is a feeling of elation from being freed of this burden. Practice makes perfect. The more we do it the easier this process becomes.

It is not enough to forgive one another; we must also forgive ourselves.

## **Grace**

**Actual Grace:** A divine intervention through that God stirs feelings of love in our hearts and minds. Through Actual Grace we feel God's love. For example, the warm feeling in our heart can follow from a moving experience (e.g., after spending time in prayer, singing a hymn, hearing a stirring homily).

**Sanctifying Grace:** A state of being rather than a feeling. To be in a state of sanctifying grace means to be in God's favor (Catechism 1996). Sanctifying grace can only be lost through mortal sin and then recovered only through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine* 265-266).

To die in a state of sanctifying grace is a guarantee one day to be in Heaven.

# The Ten Commandments

(Dt 5:6-21; Matthew 22:37).

## God's Commandments

These are not God's "Ten Pieces of Advice."

These are not God's "Ten Suggestions."

These are not God's "Ten Requests."

## Why Is it Important to Understand God's Commandments?

Here are four reasons why:

1. It is through free will that man is able to return God's love. We *show* God how much we love Him by the choices we make. Violating the commandments hurts God or others around us. Choosing God involves not breaking the Ten Commandments.
2. The Ten Commandments clearly define what is right and wrong. Without such a guide, it would be possible to justify any act. If we break one of the Ten Commandments, then it is wrong, no matter what our excuse might be.
3. God's commandments are a guideline to true happiness. Going against the commandments may provide short-term pleasure but will not bring long term happiness. The world can give us pleasure, but God is the sole dispenser of joy.

At some point, whether in this life or in the next, everyone will be held accountable for their actions. The more irresponsible the action, the more painful this accountability process will be. Said another way, the more serious the offence, then the graver the ultimate consequences. With God, no one "beats the system" and escapes being held accountable for their actions. Everyone will be held accountable either in this world or the next.

Is there an expectation that we will never break the Ten Commandments? As discussed in the chapter on Forgiveness, God does not require that we never make a mistake. God knows we are not perfect; He made us that way. However, when we break one of the Ten Commandments, we do need to ask for forgiveness and resolve in our hearts not to do it again.

Life is like a stage. Picture yourself alone on a stage located on the floor of a large stadium. In the stands rising on your right are thousands of beautiful saints and angels in Heaven. Seated in the stands rising to your left are thousands of horrific demons in Hell. Those from both Heaven and Hell are anxiously sitting on the edge of their seats watching you alone on the stage. They see your every thought, word, and deed. Cheers of joy resound from those in Heaven when you turn towards Heaven through acts of love, and horrible howls echo from those in Hell when you turn towards them through acts of sin. Make no mistake, you are in the "spotlight," for there is nothing more valuable in this world than your soul.

Why worry about other people finding out about what we did behind closed doors? Why be embarrassed to tell the priest our sins in confession? Many in Heaven have already seen you sin, when it happened.

There is no such thing as a private life. Every thought, word, and deed is laid bare for many beyond this visible world to witness. In this life, everything counts, everything matters: every thought, word, and deed, during every waking moment.

**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.**

(Matthew 22:37).

The first three commandments address offenses against God.

## **1. You Shall Worship the Lord Your God and Him Only Shall You Serve**

We worship God through the virtues of faith, hope and love.

**Faith:** Our duty toward God is to believe in Him and to bear witness to Him.

Sins against Faith:

- *Voluntary doubt:* refusing to hold true what God has revealed
- *Incredulity:* refusing to agree to a truth
- *Heresy:* post-baptismal denial of some truth
- *Apostasy:* total rejection of the Christian faith
- *Schism:* refusing submission to the Roman Pontiff (Catechism 2087-89)

**Hope:** The constant expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God.

Sins against Hope:

- *Despair:* ceasing to hope for personal salvation and attaining forgiveness
- *Presumption:* hoping to save oneself without help from on high or hoping to obtain forgiveness without conversion (Catechism 2090-92)

**Love:** To love God above everything and all creatures for him because of him.

Sins against God's Love:

- *Indifference:* failing to consider God's love
- *Ingratitude:* failing to acknowledge God's love
- *Being lukewarm:* hesitation in responding to divine love
- *Acedia:* being repelled by divine goodness
- *Hatred of God:* comes from pride and opposes God's love (Catechism 2093-94)

## **Him Only Shall You Serve**

This means:

- *Adoration:* in respect and absolute submission, to praise and exalt God and to humble oneself
- *Prayer:* lifting up the heart and mind towards God in an expression of our adoration of God

- *Sacrifice*: uniting ourselves to Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude
- *Promises*: fidelity to promises made to God as a sign of respect owed; baptism, confirmation, matrimony, and holy orders entail promises (Catechism 2096-2101)

## **You Shall Have No Other Gods before Me**

- *Superstition*: when one attributes an importance in some way magical to certain practices
- *Idolatry*: to honor and revere a creature in place of God: power, pleasure, ancestors, the government, money, etc.
- *Divination*: a desire for power over time and history; conjuring up the dead, consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens, etc.
- *Magic or sorcery*: attempts to tame occult powers, even for the sake of restoring someone's health
- *Tempting God*: putting God's power to the test by word or deed
- *Sacrilege*: treating as unworthy the sacraments, persons, things, or places consecrated to God
- *Simony*: inappropriately buying or selling spiritual things (including sacraments); does not mean people should not support the Church's ministers: "The laborer deserves his food" (Luke 10:7).
- *Atheism*: denying the existence of God; considering man to be an end to himself
- *Agnosticism*: refraining from denying God, but makes no judgment about God's existence, declaring it impossible to prove (Catechism 2111-27)

## **2. You Shall Not Take the Name of the Lord Your God in Vain**

Man must keep God's name in mind in silent, loving adoration. He will not introduce it into his own speech except to bless, praise and glorify it.

- *Abuse of God's name*: includes the improper use of the names of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the saints
- *Promises, oaths, or perjury*: being unfaithful to a promise/oath made in God's name
- *Blasphemy*: uttering words, inwardly or outwardly, of hatred or defiance towards God or misusing God's name (Catechism 2143, 2146-49, 2152)

## **3. Keep Holy the Sabbath Day**

If God "rested and was refreshed" on the seventh day, man too ought to "rest" and should let others, especially the poor, "be refreshed" (Catechism 2172).

The Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are bound to participate in mass." One can be excused for serious reasons, for example, illness or the care of infants or the sick (Catechism 2180-81).

Sunday is a time for:

- Cultivating family, social and religious lives
- Devoting time and care to family and friends

- Doing good works by helping those in need
- Caring for the sick and elderly
- Relaxation of mind and body
- Reflection, silence and meditation to grow the interior life (Catechism 2184-86)

**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**  
(Matthew 22:39).

The last seven commandments address offenses against yourself or other people.

#### **4. Honor Your Father and Mother**

The fourth commandment requires honor, affection, and gratitude towards elders. The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor (Catechism 2199, 2208).

This commandment requires the following from children:

- Whether minors or adults, to honor and obey our parents
- Obey the reasonable directions of other adults whom your parents have entrusted (e.g., teachers, coaches)
- Provide material and moral support to parents in old age, times of illness, loneliness, and distress (Catechism 2214-18)

This commandment requires the following from parents:

- Provide for their children's physical and spiritual needs
- Educate their children by providing a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and service to others are the rule
- Teach their children to prioritize spiritual dimensions over material ones
- Evangelizing their children; educating them in the faith (Catechism 2223-28)

Every family member should be tireless in forgiving one another for offenses, quarrels, injustices, and neglect (Catechism 2227).

#### **5. You Shall Not Kill**

Human life is sacred because it remains forever in a special relationship with God, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of Life; no one can under any circumstances claim for himself the right to directly destroy an innocent human being (Catechism 2258).

The Old Testament defined the fifth commandment as "slaying an innocent person." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus adds to this rule anger, hatred, and vengeance. Going further, Jesus asks his disciples to turn the other cheek and love their enemies (Catechism 2261-62; Matthew 5:21-39).

*Intentional homicide:* Forbids doing anything with the intention of directly or indirectly bringing about a person's death.

*Unintentional killing:* Is not wrong if the person has not acted in a way that brings about someone's death (e.g., a traffic accident that was not your fault is not wrong, but causing an accident because you were drinking and driving is wrong) (Catechism 2268-69).

*Abortion:* From the moment of conception, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person. Since the first century, the Church has affirmed that abortion is wrong (Catechism 2270-71; Jer 1:5).

*Euthanasia:* Putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick or dying persons is morally unacceptable. But discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or very risky can be legitimate. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to stop it is merely accepted (Catechism 2276-79).

*Suicide:* We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. This life is not ours to dispose of. Grave psychological disturbances, anguish, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of one committing suicide, and by ways known to Him alone, God can provide the opportunity for repentance (Catechism 2280-83).

*Scandal* is an attitude or behavior that leads another to do evil. Jesus said, "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 around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Jesus also said, "Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come!" (Luke 17:1; Catechism 2284-87).

*Excess:* There are only two kinds of physical pleasure in this world: those in which we should never partake and those we should do in moderation. Examples are the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine. This is especially true when an excess endangers the person's or others' safety (e.g., drunk driving) (Catechism 2290).

*Drug abuse* does damage to human health and life (Catechism 2291).

*Kidnapping*, hostage taking, terrorism, torture are all grave offenses against the fifth commandment (Catechism 2297).

Our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced anger and hatred as immoral. Anger is the desire for revenge. It can escalate to the desire to kill or harm another.

*Hatred* is when one deliberately wishes another evil. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44) (Catechism 2302-03).

*Self-defense:*

- Someone who defends his life is not guilty of murder even if he is forced to deal his aggressor a lethal blow. To repel force with moderation is lawful.
- Legitimate defense is not only a right, but also a duty for someone responsible for another's life or the common good of the family or of the state.
- Those holding authority have the right to repel by armed force aggressors.
- Legitimate public authorities have the right to punish criminals in accordance with the gravity of their crime, excluding the death penalty (Catechism 2264-66).

What are some ways to distinguish self-defense from aggression? If you are feeling hatred at the time, then it is probably aggression. If you are scared for yourself or someone else, then it is probably self-defense.

## **Legitimate Defense by Military Force**

Use of military force is not a sin provided the following conditions are met:

- Damage inflicted by aggressor is lasting and grave.
- Other means of putting an end have failed.
- There is a serious prospect of success.
- Use of arms does not produce evils graver than the evil to be eliminated.

Public authorities have the right to impose on citizens the obligations necessary for national defense.

If those who serve their country in the armed forces carry out their duties honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace (Catechism 2309-10).

## **6. You Shall Not Commit Adultery**

*Chastity*: The successful integration of sexuality within a person; involves “self-mastery” (Catechism 2337).

The chaste person maintains control over the powers of life and love placed in him. Man gains dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he freely chooses what is good (Catechism 2338-2339).

Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It requires a renewed effort at all stages in life (Catechism 2342).

The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy (Catechism 2339).

There are three forms of chastity: for married people, for widows, and for unmarried people (Catechism 2349).

### **Offences against Chastity**

- *Lust* is the disordered desire for sexual pleasure.
- *Masturbation* is deliberately stimulating oneself for sexual pleasure.
- *Fornication* is sex between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.
- *Pornography* is the display of sexual acts to third parties.
- *Prostitution* reduces a person to an instrument of sexual pleasure.
- *Rape* deeply wounds a person's respect, freedom, and physical and moral integrity. (Catechism 2351-56)

### **Offences against Marriage**

- *Adultery* is when two partners of whom at least one is married to another person have sexual relations.
- “When a man *divorces* his wife to marry someone else, he commits adultery against her. And if a wife divorces her husband and remarries, she too commits adultery” (Mark 10:11; Matthew 19:9, 5:32).
- *Polygamy* involves being married to more than one person.

- *Free union* involves the rejection of marriage or reluctance to make long-term commitments Catechism (2380-90).

## **Birth Control**

The regulation of births represents one of the aspects of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, but there are acceptable and unacceptable means of doing this (Catechism 2399).

## **Homosexuality**

Homosexuals often do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and love. Every sign of unjust discrimination against them should be avoided (Catechism 2358).

Homosexual persons are called to chastity just like everyone else. Sex between two unmarried people (fornication), whether of the same gender or not, is an offence against chastity (Catechism 2357-59).

## **7. You Shall Not Steal**

The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of someone else and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods.

Theft is taking another's property against the owner's will. Some examples are:

- Cheating another
- Corruption: unjustly influencing those with power
- Willfully damaging private or public property
- Work poorly done
- Keeping goods lent to you
- Keeping objects lost by another
- Business fraud
- Paying unjust wages
- Forcing up prices to take advantage of others
- Tax evasion
- Forgery
- Excessive expenses and waste
- Not observing contracts (Catechism 2408-11)

## **Works of Mercy**

Jesus added to this commandment a call to care for the poor. It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. An immoderate love of riches is not compatible with love for the poor. Those who are oppressed by poverty should be the objects of a preferential love on the part of the Church (Matthew 25:31-36, Catechism 2443-48).

### **Corporal Works of Mercy**

- Giving alms to the poor

- Feeding the hungry
- Sheltering the homeless
- Clothing the naked
- Visiting the sick and imprisoned
- Burying the dead

#### Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Comforting
- Consoling
- Advising and instructing

#### **Miscellaneous**

Gambling can become an offence if as a result the person is unable to provide for his needs or those that depend on him (Catechism 2413).

The seventh commandment calls for respect for creation/nature (animals, plants, and minerals). Animals may be used for food, clothing, work, leisure, or medical/scientific experiments if it contributes to the caring for human lives. Animals should not die or suffer needlessly (Catechism 2415-18).

Human work is a duty. Work is for man, not man for work. Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family and of serving the human community (Catechism 2427-28).

Enslavement of human beings is a grave offence against the seventh commandment.

#### **8. You Shall Not Bear False Witness against Your Neighbor**

The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others.

#### **Witnesses of the Gospel**

In situations that require witness to the faith, Christians must profess it and not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord (Catechism 2471-72).

“If anyone publicly acknowledges me as his friend, I will openly acknowledge him as my friend before my Father in Heaven. But if anyone publicly denies me, I will openly deny him before my Father in Heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

Martyrdom is the supreme witness to the truth of the faith; it means bearing witness even unto death (Catechism 2473).

## Offences against Truth

- *Lie*: speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving
- *False witness and perjury*: publically lying: When done in court it becomes false witness. When done under oath, it is perjury.
- *Rash Judgment*: assuming as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor
- *Detraction* (gossip): disclosing another's faults or failings to someone who did not know them
- *Calumny*: damaging another's reputation through lies
- *Adulation*: encouraging another to do bad things: It is a grave fault when it seeks to make one an accomplice to another's vices or sins.
- *Boasting or bragging*: an offence against truth (Catechism 2476-82)

## Communication of the Truth

No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it (Catechism 2488-89).

Sufficient reasons for being silent:

- Good and safety of others
- Respect for privacy
- Secrets entrusted to you
- Professional secrets, confidential information
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (Catechism 2489-92)

## 9. You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbor's Wife

The Ninth Commandment warns against lust. "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28) (Catechism 2529).

Because man is both "spirit" and "body," a certain struggle exists between the "spirit" and the "flesh" (Catechism 2516).

"Remain simple and innocent, and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man's life" (Pope John Paul II).

### Purity

Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God. The sixth Beatitude proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Catechism 2518-19).

The Battle for Purity involves:

- Seeking to *love* with undivided hearts
- Attempting to fulfill *God's will* in everything
- Refusing *impure thoughts*, which turn us aside from the path of God's commandments
- Prayer asking for *self-control*

- Being *modest*. Modesty is discreet and inspires one's choice of clothing (Catechism 2520-22).

## **10. You Shall Not Covet Anything that Is Your Neighbor's**

The tenth commandment concerns the intentions of the heart: "For where you treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21; Catechism 2534).

*Greed*: the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It involves a passion for riches and their power. An unhealthy thirst for riches is never quenched. "He who loves money never has money enough" (Catechism 2536).

*Envy*: the immoderate desire to acquire another's goods, even unjustly. When it wishes severe harm to a neighbor, it is a grave sin. Envy can lead to the worst crimes (Catechism 2538-39).

In general, people are all searching for happiness and contentment. If one becomes overly focused on the things of this world to bring happiness and contentment, then this can lead to greed and envy. The villains portrayed in movies and TV dramas are usually people searching for happiness in the wrong places. What usually happens to the movie villains who do not change their ways?

It is not wrong to desire to obtain things that belong to another, provided it is done by just means (e.g., being purchased) (Catechism 2537).

### **Poverty of Heart**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." Jesus asked his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone and bid them to "renounce all that they have" for his sake (Luke 14:33) (Catechism 2545).

Abandonment to the providence of God in Heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow (Catechism 2547).

A rich person is not one who has the most, but is one who needs the least.

### **The End Does *Not* Justify the Means**

One cannot commit a sin in an attempt to accomplish a perceived "greater good." Sin is sin.

If we have a good heart, things will always work out for the best, if not in this life then in the next. It won't always be easy, but if we can follow God's Commandments, we will find true happiness and contentment.

## Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell

No one has ever been able to change the fact that life is a transitory situation. We are all going to die someday. Wouldn't it be extremely near-sighted to not think about what comes after our short life on earth? On this temporary life of ours, a permanent condition depends.

Life on earth is not our ultimate goal; it is just a temporary situation. If all the sand on all the beaches of the world represented our life, then our time on this earth would be but one grain of sand. We will live forever.

For Christians, death is a birth into a life better than we experience here on earth. Compare this to when a baby is born. If we could remember our birth, we would probably recall it as a traumatic experience. In a matter of moments, our surroundings dramatically changed from warmth and darkness to bright lights and cold air. This air filled our lungs for the first time. People were touching our skin and swinging us through the air. Even though this was probably a scary event then, think how hard it would be for us to return to live in the womb now after experiencing life outside.

It might be hard to visualize returning to your mother's womb, but what if you were to put on SCUBA gear and then be chained to the bottom of a swimming pool for nine months? If given the choice, I don't think anyone would willingly do this. Similarly, those in Heaven do not want to come back to life on earth. We should never feel sorry for those now living in Heaven because returning to earth for them would be like returning to the womb for us. Our death is a birth into a better life, similar to our first birth. Let us not forget that we regard the birth of a baby as a beautiful and joyous event.

The Church is made up of:

- Pilgrims on earth (us)
- Those being purified in Purgatory
- Those in Heaven (Catechism 962)

We are called "pilgrims on earth" because we are "foreigners" on earth and will not reach our *true* home until we are in Heaven (Heb 11:13-14; *Catholic Replies* 177). We can pray for those in Purgatory that they may be loosed from their sins and go to Heaven. Those in Heaven can pray for us here on earth. We call this three-way relationship the Communion of Saints (Catechism 958).

After we die, we will not be given a choice of where we want to go. When we die we will go to one of three places: Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell. The only time we have a choice is while we are here on earth. That is why the choices we make in this short life of ours are so important to the rest of our existence.

### Heaven

This mystery of Heaven is beyond all understanding and description. No eye has seen, no ear heard, no heart of man conceived the wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Cor 2:9; Catechism 1027). But we can try to describe it in human terms.

Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, perfect happiness. It brings an end to our sadness. We will never get tired or bored (Catechism 1024; Catholic Replies 177).

One second spent in Heaven will be more fulfilling than a whole lifetime of happiness here on earth. The best news is that this incredible state of happiness will last forever. We will never feel the slightest pain or want for the least little thing. We will have it all. True paradise cannot be found anywhere except in Heaven.

If someone were able to bottle a piece of Heaven and sell it here on earth, it would be the most valuable commodity on the planet. Considering that it is free and available to everyone, why don't we all ask for it?

Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases and we see God face-to-face will we fully know the ways by which God has guided his creation (Catechism 314, 954). Only when we get to Heaven will we fully know and understand the meaning behind everything that happened in our life.

Those in Heaven are like God forever, for they see Him as He is, face-to-face. They see the divine essence without the mediation of any creature. The Church calls this the "beatific vision" (Catechism 1023, 1028; 1 Cor 13:12).

For the first time in our existence, we will be made perfect, as God is perfect, devoid of any imperfection or stain of sin. We will never become perfect while living on earth, so don't be so hard on yourself when you make a mistake. Simply seek forgiveness and return to Jesus.

## **Purgatory**

Referring back to the section on forgiveness, we remember that there are four steps to be totally cleansed from sin: confession (admit our sins and be sorry), act of contrition (apologize), absolution (receive forgiveness), and penance (right the wrong). People die in different states of holiness. We all are sinners, but some people have done penance (completed all four steps of forgiveness) for all their sins during their lifetime and go straight to Heaven after death. Others have not done penance for their sins and need to be purified in Purgatory before going to Heaven (Catechism 1491).

Every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment that must be purified here on earth or after death in Purgatory (Catechism 1472).

All those who die in God's grace and friendship and are still imperfectly purified are guaranteed Heaven. But after death they undergo a purification to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven (Catechism 1030).

The Church gives the name "Purgatory" to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of those damned to Hell (Catechism 1031). Those in Purgatory are guaranteed to one day be in Heaven. Those in Hell will never be able to leave or escape.

The saints can cope with God's pure light and love, while the imperfect would be uncomfortable because our faults are laid bare and appear hideous in comparison with God's perfection (*Faith and Morals* 172).

Some view Purgatory as an unfair imposition, but actually we will want to be completely purified before entering Heaven. If not, then it would be like going naked to a formal cocktail party; we would feel out of place. In this situation God is not forcing us to do something against our will; we will want to purify ourselves and be clothed in the merits of Christ before entering God's presence, just like we would want to wear the appropriate attire to a cocktail party.

We can pray for those in Purgatory that they may be loosed from their sins. Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them (Catechism 958, 1032).

### **Five Reasons To Believe in Purgatory**

We cannot prove that Purgatory exists, but we do have good reasons to believe it.

1. God is a fair judge - Everyone will be held accountable for their actions.

As discussed above, some people die without having done penance for all their sins. Would it be fair for these people to be treated the same as those who lived a holy life here on earth?

There were two men. One was a sinner his whole life, hurting those around him and indulging in worldly pleasures. He lived a selfish life until the week before he died, when he finally realized his errors and received forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The second man lived a holy life according to God's plan. He devoted his whole life to other people and continually resisted temptations.

Upon death both men are guaranteed Heaven, but would it be fair if both men earned the same reward after death? If so, then the first man would have found a loophole in the system and escaped accountability. God is a fair judge, and with Him no one can beat the system. The first man did penance for his sins in Purgatory, while the second man went directly to Heaven.

Criminals may not always get caught here on earth, but, with God, no one beats the system and escapes being held accountable for their actions. Everyone will get their just reward.

2. Heaven is filled with Christians, but not everyone dies a Christian.

How can the Bible say, "those who don't believe and obey [Jesus] shall never see Heaven" (John 3:36), but then not condemn those who do not accept Jesus through no fault of their own?

The Bible is quite clear that all salvation comes through Christ. Believing in Jesus Christ and in God, who sent Him, is necessary for obtaining salvation (Catechism 161 and 846).

“Unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God” (John 1:7, 3:3-5, 3:15; Acts 4:12). “Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Those who refuse to believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

It would be horrible to think that all non-Christians go to Hell. There are multitudes of non-Christians who love God the best way they know how. In most cases, they are worshiping God in the way they were brought up by their parents, which is the only way they know. An intermediate place (Purgatory) could provide the means for non-Christians to receive salvation through Jesus. Christ’s redemptive work was for all men.

The Church says, “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart...those too may achieve eternal salvation” (Catechism 847-48).

Maybe, while in Purgatory, everyone has the opportunity to accept Jesus as their savior after death, but prior to going to Heaven. So that way everyone gets to Heaven through Jesus, who is the savior for all of mankind, through His most perfect sacrifice on the cross.

Many Protestant Christian religions do not believe in Purgatory. If you don’t believe in Purgatory and you believe that Jesus was God (and cannot lie), then it is hard not to draw the conclusion that all non-Christians will go to Hell when they die (John 3:36, 3:3-5, 3:15; Acts 4:12; 1 John 1:7; Mark 16:16). So some Protestant religions believe that all non-Christians go to Hell when they die. We believe that our loving God would never condemn someone to Hell just because they are worshiping God in the way they were taught by their families. They may, however, have to go to Purgatory to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, just like Christians do here on earth, before going to Heaven.

### 3. Where did all the people go who died before Jesus brought salvation to the world?

If we believe that no one can get to Heaven except through Jesus (John 3:3-5, 3:15; Acts 4:12; 1 John 1:7), then no one could have gone to Heaven before Jesus died on the cross over 2,000 years ago. Hell is a permanent condition (Luke 16:26). If they went there, then they would never get to Heaven. It would have been a horrible injustice for the good people who died before Jesus’ time on earth to have been condemned to Hell.

So there must have been an intermediate place between Heaven and earth (Purgatory) where good people who died before Jesus opened the gates of Heaven went and waited for Christ’s redemption.

Apostles' Creed (100 AD): “He descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead.”

After completing His perfect sacrifice on the cross, sometime between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, Christ went down to the realm of the dead (an intermediate place) and opened Heaven’s gates for the just who had died before him (Catechism 634-37).

4. Jesus spoke of forgiveness of sins after this life.

“Even blasphemy against me or any other sin, can be forgiven – all except one: speaking against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come” (Matthew 12:31-32).

From this scripture we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, and certain others in the age to come (Catechism 1031). Heaven is our final destination, where our faith journey is over. So it would not make sense still to need forgiveness once in Heaven.

5. Praying for the dead is part of Old Testament scripture.

The teaching of Purgatory is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead already mentioned in sacred scripture (Catechism 1032).

“It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins” (2 Maccabees 12:46). Side note: around 1600 AD some Protestant denominations removed the Old Testament book of Maccabees from their version of the Bible.

## Hell

Jesus often speaks of Hell (Gehenna), of “the unquenchable fire reserved for those who to the end of their lives *refuse* to believe and be converted” (Catechism 1034; Matthew 5:22, 5:29, 7:13, 10:28, 13:42, 13:50, 25:41; Mark 9:43-48).

We cannot be with God unless we freely choose to love Him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against Him or our neighbor. To die in a state of mortal sin, without asking for forgiveness and accepting God’s mercy, means remaining separated from Him forever by our own free choice (Catechism 1033).

Some people find it difficult to believe in Hell, because it is hard to reconcile the concept with God’s infinite love. We have no right to reject this teaching of Christ simply because we regard it as unpleasant. God is not cruel. God is infinitely more loving than the best human parent. But God will not violate our free will. He is powerless before a human refusal to repent (*Faith and Morals* 173).

God predestines no one to go to Hell. For this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) and being unrepentant for our mortal sin until the end (Catechism 1037) are necessary. When we commit a mortal sin, we separate ourselves from God, completely shutting Him out of our life. God respects our free will, so He will not keep us from turning away from Him (sin). If we consciously choose to live without God, then we may very well get what we ask for: to spend the rest of eternity in a place where God does not exist, namely, Hell.

Hell is a fate far worse than death. It is pain and suffering forever. Once a person is there, they can never get out, yet it is so painful that after being there for only five seconds they will want nothing more than to leave. Five minutes will feel like five years. The person cannot imagine this continuing for five days, and then the realization will set in that this will last for more than five years, more than five million years. The universe is

fourteen billion years old, yet this will last hundreds of billions of years, and even then the pain will not come to an end.

Jesus made this clear to us in Mark 9:43-48: “If your hand does wrong, cut it off. Better to live forever with one hand than be thrown into the unquenchable fires of hell with two. If your foot carries you towards evil, cut it off! Better to be lame and live forever than have two feet that carry you to hell. And if your eye is sinful, gouge it out. Better to enter the Kingdom of God half blind than have two eyes and see the fires of hell, where the worm never dies and the fire never goes out.”

Hell is a permanent condition. Spend some time visualizing a permanent situation that never ends, ever. Try to gain an appreciation for the significance of a permanent condition.

We should not be scared of going to Hell, unless we reject God and seriously hurt other people (mortal sin). One piece of advice: no matter how difficult life gets, don't hate God.

### **The Devil: Satan**

The constant teaching of the Church is that Satan really exists and has greatly influenced the course of human history (*Catholic Replies* 179; John 8:44; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 3:8).

The Church teaches that Satan and the other demons were at first good angels, but they became evil (fallen angels) by their own doing. They were given a choice to love and serve God, but through pride they chose not to worship God. They loved themselves more than God. They became demons and adversaries of God (*Angels* 36). There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no chance for repentance for those in Hell (Catechism 391-393).

In that period of probation one of the supreme angels became envious of God's supreme dominion and thereby became an adversary of God. He was Satan and was cast out of Heaven with his angels, who became demons (*Angels* 57).

“I appointed [Satan] to be the anointed guardian cherub. You were perfect in all you did from the day you were created until that time when wrong was found in you. Therefore I cast you out of the mountain of God like a common sinner. Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty” (Ezekiel 28 12-19).

“How you have fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer. For you said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to Heaven and rule the angels...and be like the Most High.’ But instead you will be brought down to the pit of Hell” (Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:18).

“Then there was a war in Heaven; Michael and the angels under his command fought the Dragon and his hosts of fallen angels. And the Dragon lost the battle and was forced from Heaven. This great Dragon – the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world – was thrown down onto the earth with all his army” (Rev 12:7-9).

“And I remind you of those angels who were once pure and holy, but turned to a life of sin. Now God has them chained up in prisons of darkness, waiting for the judgment day” (Jude 1:6).

All the wickedness and the resulting suffering, misery, and death in this world can be traced back to Satan (*Angels* 58; *Wisdom* 2:24).

The dumbest angel is smarter than the most intelligent human, and Satan was one of the most intelligent and powerful angels. Even though they were thrown out of Heaven, Satan and the demons retained their natural powers, which are far superior to the natural power of men.

Although more powerful than we are, the forces of Hell cannot stand up to the power of Heaven. For this reason we must put on the "armor of God" and "the shield of faith" (*Angels* 60).

Although he is more powerful than a human being, Satan's power is not infinite. He is only a creature and cannot stand up to the powers of Heaven. Satan and his demons are less powerful than the good angels and far less powerful than God.

If we avail ourselves of God's help and protection, we have nothing to worry about. God will protect us from evil. God and his angels will protect us. But one should avoid anything that carries satanic connotations, including satanic music, jewelry, cults, gothic clothes, etc. We should not expose ourselves to evil forces that could be more powerful than we are.

Exorcisms are real, both in Jesus' time and ours. Jesus describes how it takes place (Matthew 12:43-45). Jesus expelled at least six demons (Matthew 8:28-34, 9:32-33, 12:22-24; Mark 1:23-27, 7:25-30; Luke 9:37-42). Jesus gave this power to his Apostles (Matthew 10:1-8). The Apostles themselves cast out many demons (Mark 6:12).

While there is such a thing as possession, the key is free will. The devil cannot take possession without the permission of the person involved, but one of the ancient names for Satan is "the trickster" or "the deceiver." Satan will tempt you and trick you by trying to make evil look good, which is one of the reasons it is important to know what Jesus actually taught, so if someone tries to tell us something else, we will know the difference.

# Saints

## Background

Honoring saints has been a part of Christianity from the very beginning. By the year 100 AD Christians were honoring other Christians who died and were asking for their intercession prayers. This practice came from a long-standing tradition in the Jewish faith of honoring prophets and holy people with shrines.

The first saints were martyrs, people who gave up their lives for the Faith. For hundreds of years, starting with the first martyrs, saints were chosen by public acclaim. Gradually the bishops and finally the Vatican took over authority for approving saints. By the tenth century the Church established the canonization process, which “officially” recognizes someone as a saint.

## Canonization

Because we need to pray for those in Purgatory, but those in Heaven can pray for us, people would like to know if someone is in Heaven or Purgatory. The Church uses the canonization process to determine if the person is in Heaven. The canonization process requires a series of miracles to give confirmation that the person is in Heaven.

Canonization does not “make” a person a saint; it merely recognizes that the person is now in Heaven. Canonization takes a long time and a lot of effort. So while every person who is canonized is in Heaven, not every person in Heaven has been canonized. There are many, many more people in Heaven than those officially recognized as saints (canonized) by the Church. The Church’s list of saints is not intended to be a complete list of people in Heaven. We are all called to be saints.

The modern-day canonization process begins after the death of a Catholic whom people regard as holy. Often the process starts many years after death in order to give historical perspective on the candidate. The local bishop investigates the candidate’s life to see if they lived a holy life. Then a panel of theologians at the Vatican evaluates the candidate. After approval by the panel and cardinals of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the pope proclaims the candidate “venerable.”

The next step, “beatification,” requires evidence of one miracle (except in the case of martyrs). Since miracles are considered evidence that the person is in Heaven and can intercede for us, the miracle must take place after the candidate’s death and as a result of a specific petition to the candidate. When the pope proclaims the candidate “blessed,” the person can be venerated by a particular region or group of people with whom the person holds special importance.

Only after one more miracle will the pope “canonize” the saint (this includes martyrs). The title of saint tells us that the person lived a holy life, is in Heaven, and is to be honored by the universal Church.

## Intercessors

Intercession prayers are when we pray for someone else. Since saints have direct access to God in Heaven, their prayers for us can be particularly effective.

Just as St. Paul asked the other disciples to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25), and just as he prayed for them (2 Thess 1:11), so now we can ask St. Paul and the other saints in Heaven to pray for us. The saints care for those whom they have left on earth and can help us with their prayers. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world (Catechism 956 and 2683).

In Revelation 5:8, the prayers of God's people are brought before the Lord in the form of golden vials filled with incense.

Through the Communion of Saints, we are not cut off from our fellow Christians at death, but can be brought closer to them. Those in Heaven can be with us at every moment, both in public and private. They can see our thoughts, so they can be with us in a more intimate way than any person on earth can be. "Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death, and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life" (St Dominic).

The Communion of Saints is sometimes misunderstood. We do not worship saints, but rather we ask them to pray for us, just like we ask other people on earth to pray for us. Saints are not able to grant any favor or perform any miracle on their own; these come directly from God.

We still recognize Jesus as the one Mediator between God and man. Asking other people to pray for us does not change this. St. Paul says, "Here are my directions: Pray much for others; plead for God's mercy upon them; give thanks for all he is going to do for them...This is good and pleases God our Savior" (1 Tim 2:1-3).

Asking saints to intercede for us is not the same as divination or conjuring up the dead, which is forbidden by the Ten Commandments (Duet 18:11). The former is a humble request for a loved one to pray to God on our behalf, the latter is an occult practice bent on gaining information or power.

## **Role Models**

The saints are excellent role models. They lived inspiring lives that we should strive to emulate. They set a standard we can use to measure success in this life. There are many interesting and inspiring books on the lives of the saints that would be well worth reading.

When we look at people who have lived the Catholic faith to the fullest, we find truly impressive people who are shining lights (Luke 11:33-36) not only to Catholics, but also to the rest of the world. We only get one shot at this life, so why not live it to the fullest, like the saints did?

## **Your Patron Saint**

In preparing for confirmation one should choose a patron saint. Ideally choose a saint you can relate to and will pray to for the rest of their life. During the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will take this saint's name as your confirmation name.

The following Website has short summaries on some of the saints to help you choose a patron. <http://www.catholic.org/saints/popular.php>

In addition to having a confirmation sponsor here on earth, the confirmed also gain a sponsor in Heaven, who will look out for them their whole life.

## Angels

Angels are spirits (*Angels* 18). They never had bodies or lived on earth as humans. Because they are purely spiritual, the angels occupy the highest place on the scale of created things (*Angels* 25). “And yet you have made man only a little lower than the angels” (Ps 8:5).

There are no angelic families; they do not have a mother or a father. Each angel is a direct creation of God (*Angels* 48). The Bible references nine types of angels: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels, and Angels (*Angels* 46).

### Angels' Intellect and Free Will

Just like man, the angels have intellect and free will (*Angels* 28). Unlike man, whose intellect develops with age, the angels are in possession of their full intellect from the beginning of their existence, and their mental process is instantaneous and perfect. The angels' understanding is also devoid of error or doubts (*Angels* 29-30, 46).

Just like man's life on earth, the angels underwent a period of probation where they were free to choose between good and evil. During this time, the angels had the opportunity to merit Heaven and eternal life with God or to sin and thereby fall from grace. We do not know how long this probation period lasted (*Angels* 45).

Sin cannot exist where there is no free will. Scripture reveals that some of the angels sinned and were banished from Heaven. The good angels never committed a sin (*Angels* 35, 47).

Once admitted into Heaven, angels and humans no longer choose between good and evil (sin) (*Angels* 37). The angels that devoted themselves to God were admitted into Heaven and began enjoying the Beatific Vision without fear of ever losing it. The angels of Heaven can sin no more, for no sin is possible in Heaven (*Angels* 60-61). Once a person has seen the face of God (Beatific Vision), it is then impossible for them to commit a sin.

### Guardian Angels

Just as God sent an angel to lead Moses and the Jews through the desert to the Holy Land (Exod 23:20), He graciously sends guardian angels to help each of us through our journey on earth (*Angels* 106).

“For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go” (Ps 91:11).

“The angels are...spirit-messengers sent out to help and care for those who are to receive his salvation” (Heb 1:14).

“Beware that you don't look down upon a single one of these little children. For I tell you that in Heaven *their angels* have constant access to my Father” (Matthew 18:10).

In saying "their angel," Jesus reveals that each child has a guardian angel (*Angels* 108).

Our guardian angels help us in a number of ways. They help us get to Heaven and keep us safe on earth.

- They defend and protect our immortal soul from the seductions of the world and from Satan.
- They often shield us from dangers that threaten our lives. There are numerous interesting books relaying stories of angelic assistance.
- They pray for us and with us, and they offer our prayers, our suffering, and our good desires to God. They help us praise God. (*Angels* 126-128)

Against all the invisible enemies of mankind stands as shield and protection our Guardian Angel, whose struggles and victories are known to God alone (*Angels* 127).

## **Your Guardian Angel**

God assigns an angel to watch over each one of us. We each have our own guardian angel. This should give us some indication how important we are to God that He assigns an angel to watch over each one of us for 24/7. We are very fortunate to have such a powerful and dedicated friend.

Nothing reminds man more vividly of his superior spiritual nature and of his glorious destiny in Heaven than this unseen heavenly escort given to us during our earthly pilgrimage. Our Guardian Angels have but one great desire: to lead us safely through life until we attain the glory and peace that they themselves possess (*Angels* 125).

The angels are deserving of our veneration and adoration, but they are creatures like us, and as such they should not be worshiped (Rev 22:8-9; *Angels* 147).

“Since God has given them orders in our regard, let us not be ungrateful to the Angels who execute them with so much charity, and assist us in our needs, which are so great. Let us be filled with devotion and gratitude towards such guardians. Let us love them as much as we can...They are faithful, they are prudent, they are powerful...Let us follow them...Should you foresee a grave temptation or fear a great trial, invoke your guardian.... He does not sleep, he does not slumber... [He] guards and consoles you every moment" (Saint Bernard).

How would you feel if you helped someone every day and they never acknowledged or thanked you? Take the time to pray to your guardian angel to thank them for helping you and to ask for their assistance.

Here is a beautiful prayer to your guardian angel, or you can talk to them in your own words.

*Angel of God, my guardian dear  
To whom God's love commits me here  
Ever this day be at my side  
To light and guard, to rule and guide,  
I love you, Guardian Angel. Amen.*

Think about the day that you will get to meet your Guardian Angel in person. They may be the one to escort you to Heaven. “Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham” (Luke 16:22).

The feast of the Guardian Angels is celebrated on October 2.

## Prayer

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God (Catechism 2590).

Can we spend quality time with God if our "mind" is wandering and distracted with random thoughts? Also, prayer involves more than just a conversation; it is about "falling in love" with God by "raising our heart" to Him. It is about developing a relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and loving them more than anything else on earth.

Jesus Himself spent much time in prayer (e.g., Luke 3:21, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:28, 10:21, 11:1, 22:32, 22:41-44, 23:34; Mark 1:35, 6:46, 11:25, 15:34).

Even though Jesus is God, through prayer He spent time with His Father, whom He loved very much. We are called to follow Jesus' example and develop a relationship with God through prayer.

There is a saying that two people must eat a pound of salt together to become close friends. It takes a lot of meals eaten together to consume a pound of salt. Just like spending time together increases a friendship, spending time in prayer is how we get close to God.

If we do not focus on the right things in this life, we will quickly squander our time here on earth, which is shorter than we might think. One item at the top of our priority list should be to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. All the theology and all the articles of our Catholic Faith are useless, if we don't develop a loving relationship with God and our neighbors. This begins with prayer.

There are many reasons to develop a relationship with God, but one reason is that life is not easy. We will all go through difficult times, and one of the keys to being happy even during tough times is to tap into something bigger than ourselves and more powerful than anything on this earth, to call upon God our Father to help us maintain an internal peace no matter the storm raging around us. People who tap into this invisible help gain a certain strength and perspective that people who rely solely on themselves struggle to find. Happiness and contentment in life are not found in controlling our surroundings. Rather, true happiness is found by controlling how we feel on the inside, during life's ups and downs.

God will not leave us unaided, unless we do not invite Him into our lives, because He will not violate our free will. So don't leave God out of your life, but rather invite Him in every day through prayer.

### **Prayer Is Two-way Communication**

God *always* answers prayers, but since He always has our best interest in mind, the answer is not always, "Yes."

When a child asks his/her parents for something, what are the possible ways the parents might lovingly answer?

- "Yes" or "No"
- "It depends on..." or "You need to wait..."

We should not view God as a vending machine, where we deposit a coin (prayer) to get whatever we want. We should not approach prayer from a “What’s in it for me?” perspective.

We need to have faith that God’s answer (yes or no) is the best thing for us at the time. Only when we get to Heaven will we be able to see all the circumstances surrounding God’s answer and truly understand how it was best for us at the time.

God knows what’s best for us, even better than we do ourselves. For this reason we should pray that *God’s will be done*, rather than our own (Luke 22:42). We should trust that through His infinite love, God will always do the right thing for us.

If prayer is two-way communication, should we expect to hear voices from Heaven? If not, then how does God talk to us?

One way that God talks to us is through the Bible and other spiritual books. For example, listen closely to the readings and homily in mass and latch onto the one phrase that really strikes home with you. This may be God’s message for you this week.

God can talk to us by putting thoughts into our mind and feelings into our heart. If we pray about something that we need help with, the answer may come to us in our thoughts, and we suddenly find resolve in our heart to move ahead. All of a sudden, it will become clear to us what we need to do, and we will have the strength to do it.

Another way God can talk to us is through coincidences. Look for coincidences in your life and ask yourself if God is trying to tell you something. For example: someone, even a stranger, may tell us something pertaining to our situation. We may also see something in a book or movie pertaining to our situation.

God’s loving hand is behind every detail in our life, so in a sense, there are no such things as coincidences. See God’s loving hand in everything around you. “There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle” (Albert Einstein).

There was a man who lived near the ocean. A hurricane was approaching and was forecasted to hit his house. The authorities were evacuating everyone from the beachfront area where the man lived, but he refused to leave his house saying, “I have asked God for His help, and I have faith that God will take care of me.”

The police sent a patrol car to the man’s house asking him to leave, but he refused. “God will take care of me,” he stated confidently, as the police car drove away.

As the hurricane neared, the water began to rise, flooding the first floor of the man’s house. The authorities sent a boat to the man’s house, asking him to leave, but he refused. “God will take care of me,” he stated confidently.

As the hurricane made landfall, the water flooded the second floor of the man’s house, requiring him to take refuge on his roof. The Coast Guard

sent a helicopter to rescue him, but he still refused to leave. "God will take care of me," he stated confidently.

Eventually the waters washed the man's house away, and he drowned. When the man arrived in Heaven, he asked God, "Why did you not take care of me? I asked for your help."

God replied, "I sent a police car, a boat and a helicopter to help you. What more could you have asked for?" (anon).

The man died because he was waiting for a miracle that defied the laws of nature, but that is not the primary way that God helps us. God more often assists us through normal means and through other people. He usually does not rush into our lives with overpowering supernatural force, but rather He tenderly works "behind the scenes" to help us in an almost unperceivable way. It was no coincidence that a police car, a boat, and a helicopter showed up at this man's house. God was answering his prayers.

As the poem "Footprints in the Sand," by Mary Stevenson, describes, it is often hard to detect God's gentle and loving hand. Sometimes it is hard to see that a prayer was answered at the time. It is often not until we look back on the situation in hindsight, long after it happened, that we are able to see God was indeed there for us.

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with Jesus.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Jesus.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned Jesus about it:

"Jesus, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

Jesus replied, "My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

If we ask for God's help, then we should trust that He is there, even if we don't feel that way. If we turn over everything to God and pray for His will to be done, things always work out for the best either in this life or the next, even if we cannot see it at the time. What a tremendous stress relief it is to hand everything over to God.

We are not exempt from experiencing difficult times, but we need to remember that our ultimate goal is not on this earth. We should not focus only on making things work out during our life here on earth because we will live forever. A very small fraction of our life actually takes place here on earth. Eternity is much more important than this temporary life on earth. We should keep our perspective on the long term and not “sweat the small stuff” during this short life of ours.

## **How to Pray**

Make time for prayer.

Time and duration of prayer arise from a determined will. One must make time for the Lord, with firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter (Catechism 2710).

## **In Solitude**

The Bible often describes Jesus as going off by Himself to pray. Find a time that you can spend praying in solitude (e.g., in the morning just after getting up and in the evening just before going to bed).

TAWG: Time Alone With God. Make a commitment to spend ten-to-twenty minutes a day alone with God. Use the different techniques described below to place yourself in the presence of Jesus, and then let Him do the rest.

Ten-to-twenty minutes spent in touch with God (actually praying) goes by like two minutes, and you don't want it to end, while spending twenty minutes alone thinking about various “things” (not praying, but letting your mind wander) feels like two hours, and you can't wait for it to end. Hopefully spending time with God is a refreshing and energizing experience that you will want to repeat, rather than something you feel obligated to do.

Through prayer, we can experience God in a very real way. We can truly develop a close, personal relationship with Him that becomes a cornerstone of how we live our lives. Many of the saints spent hours a day in prayer, not because they felt obligated to, but rather because they enjoyed it so much and felt reluctant to leave their joyful union with God to venture out into the hectic world.

Oh, what a joy to be in love and not be alone. Fall in love with God through prayer, and you will never feel lonely again. The love between humans can be imperfect at times because we are imperfect, but God's love is perfect in every way and completely satisfying.

## **In Public**

We can pray throughout our busy days by taking a moment to think about God. It is possible to pray while walking in public, seated in a restaurant, at school, cooking at home, working at the office, etc. (Catechism 2743).

A public prayer does not have to be long; short phrases are good. No one has to know you are even doing it. A silent, “I love you,” said during a busy day is a beautiful prayer. Or simply lift your mind to Heaven and say, “Come, Holy Spirit,” or, “Jesus, help me,” or,

"Mary, pray for me." It is easy and, if done regularly, it can make a real difference in our life.

It is simply a matter of thinking about Jesus and including him in the routine of our daily lives. Whatever you are doing at the time, silently ask Jesus to do it with you. By inviting Him in, we allow Jesus to work through us. Remember that Jesus is the most skilled person in the universe at whatever task we are trying to accomplish (e.g., school, work, hobbies, relationships). It is incredible what can be accomplished when we bring Jesus along as our partner in life.

Every action in our life can be a prayer, if we do it with God: brushing our teeth in the morning, our daily conversations, work, relaxing at night, and so on.

Jesus wants to be our "invisible friend," someone we talk to and involve in our daily lives. Jesus called on us to "be like the children" (Matthew 18:3) who can readily see things like this, rather than the self-sufficient, intellectual adult who cannot. Use your imagination to spend time with Jesus.

Every time the slightest worry pops into our head, we should turn it over to Jesus and forget about it. God does not ask us to worry. On the contrary, He wants us to turn everything over to Him and not get stressed out.

## **Five Techniques**

Remember the definition of prayer as "raising one's mind and heart to God." Given our busy and demanding lives, it is not always easy to spend quality time (ten-to-twenty minutes a day) with God. So the first step is to make prayer a priority. Make a commitment to dedicate ten-to-twenty minutes of your "busy" day to prayer. Pick a time of the day that works best for you (e.g., just after waking up, just before going to bed, during lunch) and carve out ten-to-twenty minutes to dedicate to prayer.

The second step is to pull ourselves out of our busy lives and place ourselves in the presence of Jesus (i.e., raise our mind and heart to God). Without help it is often difficult to keep our mind from wandering and thinking about things going on in our life. There are numerous techniques to help us break away from this world to find union with God. Five are discussed below, one for each workday of the week.

As a suggestion, try varying your methods of prayer from day to day to keep things fresh. It is also a good idea to use a cooking timer or alarm clock so you don't have to worry about keeping track of time.

### **1. Silent Reflection**

Don't feel like you have to do all the talking or that you have to fill your prayer time with words. If we spend all our time talking, then we are not listening. It is in the silence of our hearts that God speaks to us, so we should spend part of our prayer time in silent reflection. Think of prayer as entering God's thoughts, rather than our own.

Take three long, deep breaths to clear your mind and relax. Close your eyes and listen to the background sounds around you (e.g., the hum of the air conditioner, the sound of passing cars, bird song). Recognize that there is a certain silence in this background

hum. In that silence God is waiting there for you. Go to Him; place yourself in His presence; raise your heart and mind to Him.

It sort of feels like walking up to the edge of a large cliff. It can be an intimidating yet beautifully awesome experience. Trust yourself and don't shy away from the feelings and emotions you experience as God descends into your heart and mind. Prayer is not an intellectual experience, but rather it is about spending time with God and experiencing Him in a real way.

Just like when we confide in a good friend, through our thoughts God can give us advice, comfort, and love. In this silence God can energize us and give us strength to live and love as Christ taught us. Our prayer life can become an essential ingredient for making it through our day, more so than a good breakfast.

## 2. Reading

We listen to God when we read divine writings. Seek in reading, and you will find in meditating (Catechism 2653-54). Reading religious material is a great way to pray.

Find a quiet place; set your timer and begin reading inspiring material. At some point while reading, you will find your mind drift off to God. A certain phrase or word may catch your attention. It could happen five or fifteen minutes into your reading, but when it does happen, put down the book; close your eyes, and let your mind (imagination) and heart go with God. Allow God to carry you off in joyful union with Him.

In much the same way, listen during mass for a word or phrase in the readings or the homily that catches your attention, and then see where your mind goes. This may be God's message for you. You can read or hear the same Bible passage ten times and get a different message each time. It is not as much about the story as it is about putting yourself in touch with God and listening to the thoughts and feelings God puts into your heart and mind.

Here are just a few places to purchase inspiring books:

<http://www.tanbooks.com/>  
<http://www.catholicstore.com/>  
<http://www.ignatius.com/>  
<http://www.osvpublishing.com/>  
<http://www.catholic.net/>

My personal favorite is *He and I*, by Gabrielle Bossis.

## 3. Visualization and Using Your Imagination

Just as your dreams at night are very "real" experiences, through visualization (using your imagination) you can experience God in a very real way while still awake. For example, you can visualize your guardian angel at your side, imagine what Heaven might be like, visualize the crucifixion or other Gospel scenes, imagine yourself prostrated in front of God in Heaven, and imagine the day that you will meet Jesus face to face.

You can combine this technique with the one above by reading a Gospel passage and putting the Bible down to imagine that you are actually there as one of the participants in the Gospel story. Simply get involved in the Bible story at whatever point you feel drawn into it. Visualize that you are actually participating in the event, holding the light in the cave at Bethlehem, fixing the manger, helping with the animals.

Let your imagination run. Just as you don't know what is going to happen next in your dreams, God will take you places through your imagination that you will never think of on your own.

Finding God is not an intellectual process; it is something we do through faith, which is believing in something we cannot see. When we find God on the other side of faith, we experience love and emotions that we know do not come from us. This experiencing God is the reason many people remain devout throughout their lives, because once they experience it, they do not want to live without it. Don't place too much emphasis on things that we can see or prove because we may miss the true meaning of life. As an example, I can't prove that the words in the book *He and I* came from Jesus, but I do know that these words bring me into joyful union with Jesus, and that is all that matters.

#### 4. Music

Listening to inspirational music is also a way to spend time in prayerful union with God. Find a quiet place, set your timer, and put on some spiritual music. Close your eyes and let the music carry your heart and mind up to God. Imagine, for example, that you are carrying the song to Heaven and placing it at God's feet or that you are leading a choir of angels in this song (Luke 2: 13-14).

Singing hymns is a form of prayer as we lift our voices and hearts to God. For example, sing a favorite hymn to Jesus under your breath. When we sing at mass, this is a form of prayer and a way to raise our heart and mind to God.

Christian radio has really taken off in the last decade. If you don't have a local Christian station (e.g., KLOV) where you live, then you can find one on Internet radio through iTunes or another online service.

#### 5. The Rosary

Praying the Rosary brings together numerous techniques into one form of prayer.

- The combination of the repetitive prayers and beads helps pull us out of our busy lives and clear out distractions.
- The repetitive prayers are a form of meditation that helps us listen rather than talk and focus our mind and heart on God.
- Meditating on the mysteries helps us visualize Jesus' life and place ourselves in the Gospel scenes.
- Praying the Rosary takes approximately fifteen-to-twenty minutes, thus providing a means to dedicate time for prayerful union with God without the need of another timer.
- When we pray the Rosary, Mary prays with us and carries our prayers to her Son.

If we pray the Rosary daily, it can change our life.

## **Other Helpful Hints**

### **Ask for Help**

Ask for help from Mary, the saints (your patron saint), and your guardian angel. Before beginning your prayer time, think about them and ask them to pray with you. Ask them to help you pray. Ask them to pray on your behalf. Ask them to take your prayers to God, to whom they have direct access.

### **Use Your Own Words**

Memorized prayers are good, but we should also use our own words. Talk to those in Heaven (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Mary, your guardian angel, and patron saint) as you would talk to a close family member or friend, as they want to be your close friend.

### **Distraction**

We must try to fight the tendency of our minds to wander and become cluttered with thoughts of this world or ourselves. Clearing our mind of distractions and focusing on God can be a struggle. We have to work at it continually. Distraction is critical to overcome if we want truly to enter prayerful union with God.

### **Dryness**

Sometimes prayer brings us complete fulfillment, which is God's gift to us. Other times we feel nothing, but we persevere in prayer anyway; this is our gift to God. Any loving relationship is a two-way street (Catechism 2729-31).

### **Sacramentals**

Sacramentals are any object, prayer, or action that can put us in touch with God (*Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals*).

The Church does not have a definitive list of sacramentals, but some examples are:

- Blessings
- Rosary Beads (given to St. Dominic by our Lady in 1206).
- Crucifix
- Stations of the Cross
- Medals (e.g., St. Christopher, Miraculous Medal).
- Scapular (e.g., Brown Scapular given to St. Simon Stock by our Lady in 1251).
- Holy Water

Among the sacramentals, blessings (of persons, meals, objects and places) come first (Catechism 1671).

Unlike the Seven Sacraments, which were instituted by Christ himself, the Church creates sacramentals to sanctify everyday life (*Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals*).

The use of sacramentals obliges the participants to continue deepening their relationship with God. They are intended to help us pray. Sacramentals are not charms adopted to protect us from physical and spiritual harm, but are a means by which we are to grow in

faith, hope, and love. If we use them only to secure benefits of a temporal kind then we are abusing the sacramentals (*Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals*).

## **Types of Verbal Prayers**

There are four types of verbal prayers where we are doing the talking: praise, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession.

### **Prayer of Praise**

Praise gives glory to God not only because of what He does, but also more importantly because of who He is. Praise recognizes that God is God, the only being who was not created and the only being who has always existed (Catechism 2639).

Through adoration we exalt the greatness of the Lord who created us. It is the homage to the infinite Creator of the Universe who made us out of nothing (Catechism 2628). There is only one being, God, who can claim to have not been created and who was responsible for creating everything else. No one and nothing else is worthy of our worship and praise.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Two of Jesus' prayers explicitly recorded in the gospels begin with thanksgiving (Catechism 2603; Matthew 11:25; John 11:41). St Paul often began and ended his prayers with thanksgiving (Catechism 2638; 1Th 5:18; Col 4:2).

Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become an opportunity for offering thanks to God (Catechism 2638, 2648).

### **Prayer of Petition**

A petition is to ask for something. It is a characteristic of love to think first of the one whom we love. In the same way we pray first for the Kingdom of God. The "Our Father" starts off with three petitions for God's sake then follows with four petitions for our own sake (Catechism 2632, 2804).

The "Our Father" has seven petitions (Matthew 6:9-15; Catechism 2857-64):

1. *Hallowed be Thy name*: may everyone praise God
2. *Thy kingdom come*: may God reign in our hearts and in the whole world
3. *Thy will be done*: may God's will be done, more so than our own
4. *Our daily bread*: asking for earthly nourishment: food, clothing, and shelter
5. *Forgive us our trespasses*: asking forgiveness for our sins
6. *Lead us not into temptation*: keep difficult temptations from our path
7. *Deliver us from evil*: asking for victory over Satan and his works

The most important prayer of petition for ourselves is to ask forgiveness. It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer (Catechism 2631).

### **Prayer of Intercession**

Intercession means to pray for other people or to ask them to pray for us. In intercession, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm (Catechism 2635).

Just once try praying for your enemy and see what happens. You might be surprised.

### **Your Prayer Life**

What are some things you can do to improve your own prayer life? Make a commitment to begin today.

- *TAWG: Dedicate ten-to-twenty minutes a day for prayer. For example, get up fifteen minutes early and pray the Rosary in the morning.*
- *Say, "I love you, God," during your busy day.*
- *Read one paragraph from the Bible or a spiritual book at bedtime.*
- *Ask your guardian angel and patron saint for help every day.*

It is very important to ask the Holy Spirit to come into our heart every day. He will give us what we need to make it through this life, specifically, the Seven Gifts:

1. *Wisdom:* assists in making good decisions
2. *Understanding:* helps one to see through to the true meaning of things
3. *Counsel:* provides advice
4. *Fortitude:* helps one to endure troubles with patience
5. *Knowledge:* educates through God's teachings; enlightenment
6. *Piety:* instills religious devotion
7. *Fear of the Lord:* motivates the proper respect for God

Prayer time can become our primary source of nourishment that gives us strength to make it through the day (more so than meals) and make it through our lives (more so than money).

Pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on you.

## **Introduction to the Seven Sacraments**

### **Sacraments of Christian Initiation**

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist

### **Sacraments of Healing**

- Reconciliation
- Anointing the Sick

### **Sacraments of Service to Others**

- Holy Orders
- Matrimony

### **Jesus Established the Sacraments**

The sacraments were instituted by Jesus Himself and clearly find their roots in sacred scripture. The Bible also documents that the early Apostolic Church administered and received the same Seven Sacraments that we practice today. Through Apostolic Succession, the Seven Sacraments have been handed down from generation to generation through an unbroken line of bishops that traces its roots back to Jesus Himself.

Some Christian denominations broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and retained their bishops, thus maintaining the Apostolic Succession. These churches still validly practice some or all of the same Seven Sacraments that the Roman Catholic Church does. Other Christian denominations discontinued practicing some of the sacraments when they broke away from the Catholic Church (+/-1500 AD). But make no mistake about it, all Seven Sacraments have been a part of Christianity from the very beginning.

Some Christians ask the question, "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" A Catholic can answer, "Yes, every time I receive one of the Seven Sacraments, because Jesus and the Trinity are truly present in each one."

### **Power of the Sacraments**

The Sacraments possess power that does not depend on the knowledge of the recipient. When we give water to a plant, the plant does not have to know and understand what water is to receive life from it. In just the same way, an infant can receive life from the waters of Baptism without understanding what is going on at the time.

The Sacraments actually have the power to forgive sins and feed us with the Body and Blood of Christ. Even if we do not mentally or physically feel different after receiving a sacrament, the benefit is still there.

The effects of the sacraments do not depend on how we feel at the time. Contrast this to the crucifix, for example. The power of the crucifix depends on the reaction of the individual. Some people walk by a crucifix and never feel any different, while for others the crucifix has transformed their understanding of Christ's sacrifice and love for us.

For each of the Sacraments, we will discuss the:

1. Effects of the Sacrament
2. Scriptural Basis
3. Rite

# **Sacrament of Baptism**

## **Effects of the Sacrament**

Through baptism we are born into the church. Baptism is the door that gives access to the other sacraments (Catechism 1213).

By baptism *all* sins are forgiven, Original Sin and personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. Nothing remains that would impede one's entry into Heaven (Catechism 1263). If by chance someone were to die immediately after receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, they would go straight to Heaven, regardless of what they did in their life.

Baptism also makes the "new creature" an adopted son or daughter of God. We become members of the Body of Christ. We become a temple of the Holy Spirit (Catechism 1265, 1279).

## **Scriptural Basis**

### **Old Testament**

Noah's Ark was a foreshadowing of baptism. Sin was washed clean by the flood, and Noah's family was saved (Catechism 1219).

Moses' parting of the Red Sea, which freed the Jews from slavery, announced the liberation to be brought about by baptism (Catechism 1221).

### **Established by Jesus**

Jesus began His public life after having Himself baptized by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13; Luke 3:21-22).

Jesus told Nicodemus that a man must be "born of water and the Spirit before he can enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The water and blood that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of baptism and the Eucharist (Catechism 1225).

After His resurrection, Christ gave this mission to his Apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).

### **Early Church**

There are many stories of the Apostles' baptizing people in the early church (Acts 2:38, 8:12-17, 10:48, 16:15, 16:31; Romans 6:3).

### **The Rite**

Ordinarily the bishop or priest or deacon can administer the Sacrament of Baptism, but in case of necessity any person can baptize another (Catechism 1256).

It is done either by immersion or pouring water over the candidate's head and saying, "[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

For an adult to receive baptism, they must have the intention to receive the sacrament, be instructed in the Christian faith, and be sorry for their personal sins.

Baptism leaves an indelible spiritual mark that cannot be removed. Therefore, baptism cannot be repeated (Catechism 1272).

## Sacrament of Confirmation

### Effects of the Sacrament

Through confirmation the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strengthening of the Holy Spirit. The confirmed receive a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as was granted to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Catechism 1285, 1302; Acts 2:1-12).

The Sacrament of Confirmation:

- Further strengthens our relationship with God our Father
- Firmly unites us to Christ
- Increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Makes us an adult member in the Church
- Gives us strength to spread and defend the faith (Catechism 1303)

To be an adult member of the Church, we need to decide for ourselves that we want to be Catholic. We should not receive the Sacrament of Confirmation because we attended some classes or because our parents expect us to receive the sacrament at this time. We should only receive the Sacrament of Confirmation if we decide for ourselves that we truly want to be a member of the Catholic Church for the rest of our lives. If we have doubts or are unsure, then we should wait to receive the sacrament at a later stage in our life. This needs to be your choice and not someone else's.

The Confirmed are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed (Catechism 1285).

The Holy Spirit gives us what we need make it through this life, His Seven Gifts:

1. *Wisdom*: assists in making good decisions
2. *Understanding*: helps one to see through to the true meaning of things
3. *Counsel*: provides advice
4. *Fortitude*: helps one to endure troubles with patience
5. *Knowledge*: educates through God's teachings; enlightenment
6. *Piety*: instills religious devotion
7. *Fear of the Lord*: motivates the proper respect for God

The teenage years are not easy, and, maybe more so than at any other time in your life, you could use the help of the Holy Spirit and His Seven Gifts. Some of the most difficult decisions you will ever face will occur during your teenage years. This is a critical age, as the decisions you make during your teenage years can influence the rest of your life.

Similar to the way God answers prayers, the Holy Spirit often resides in us in a very subtle way. Often we don't notice the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, until we look back on our life or a particular a situation. It is in hindsight that we are best able to see His help. So don't expect bells to sound in your head when receiving the sacrament. If you continually pray to the Holy Spirit, He will quietly transform your life and help you through His Seven Gifts.

## **Preparation for Confirmation**

In order to become more capable of assuming the responsibilities of Christian life, one should (Catechism 1309):

1. Aim at a more intimate relationship with Christ.
2. Strive to bring the Holy Spirit into your life.
3. Awaken a sense of belonging to the Church
4. Seek a sponsor.

## **Scriptural Basis**

### **Old Testament**

"From the stump of David will grow a shoot...the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

"I will put my Spirit within you so that you will obey my laws and do whatever I command" (Ezek 36:25-27; Isaiah 44:3-35).

### **Established by Jesus**

"Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38).

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Men can only reproduce human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from Heaven" (John 3:5-8).

"It is best for you that I go away, for if I don't, the Comforter won't come. If I do, he will --- for I will send him to you...There is much more I want to tell you, but you can't understand it now. When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth" (John 16:7-15; Luke 24:49).

"Then he breathed on them and told them, 'receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22).

### **Early Church**

"Pentecost had now arrived...tongues of fire appeared and settled on the Apostles' heads. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they didn't know" (Acts 2:1-11).

Confirmation and baptism are clearly two different things in the early Church.

"As soon as John and Peter arrived they began praying for the new Christians to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17).

"As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then, when Paul laid his hands upon their heads, the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:5-6).

## The Rite

The Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by the bishop through the anointing with oil on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of hands and through the words, "be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (Catechism 1300).

As we see from the Acts 8:15-17 and Acts 19:5-6, this "laying on of hands" started with the Apostles themselves, and as will be discussed in the chapter on the bishops and the pope, the clergy of the Catholic Church represents an unbroken line of "laying on of hands" that goes back to Peter himself. The bishop who will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to you is part of this unbroken line through a "laying on of hands" that goes back to the Apostles themselves.

One should receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior (Catechism 1310).

Confirmation is given only once as it imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark.

During confirmation the candidate will be anointed with oil. The word "Christian" means "anointed," just as Christ himself was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Catechism 1289).

By this anointing the confirmed receive the seal of the Holy Spirit, which marks:

1. Our total belonging to Christ
2. Our enrollment in His service forever  
A promise of divine protection in trials (Catechism 1296)

# **The Eucharist**

## **The Blessed Sacrament**

The most blessed Eucharist contains the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained (Catechism 1324, 1374). It is truly Jesus Himself.

Jesus did not just inhabit this earth 2,000 years ago and then leave, but rather He physically remained here on earth with us for all generations. At this very moment Jesus is physically present in every tabernacle in every Catholic Church around the world. Why do we genuflect when we enter a church? Have you thought about who is inside the tabernacle, the infinite Creator of the Universe, who is all deserving of our utmost love and respect?

Perhaps the most incredible thing we will ever do in this life occurs each and every time we receive the Eucharist. The infinite and eternal Creator of the Universe is sitting on our tongue. The Eucharist is God, the most powerful entity in the universe. The Eucharist is by far the most powerful thing on this earth.

When you go to mass, visualize what you are actually receiving when you receive communion. When you pray after receiving communion, reflect on what just happened.

This may be hard to believe, but remember that nothing is impossible for God. Could not God's word, which can make what did not exist from nothing, also change existing things into what they were not before? (St. Ambrose, Catechism 1375). To deny that God can accomplish such a feat is to deny that God is the Almighty, all-powerful. God created the universe out of nothing. Why can't He convert bread into Jesus?

"Do not doubt whether this is true, but rather receive the words of the Savior in faith, for since He is the truth, (as God). He cannot lie" (St Cyril). Jesus clearly stated that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:48-71). Jesus cannot lie, because He is God, and God is Truth.

## **Scriptural Basis**

### **Old Testament**

"Melchizedek, the king of Jerusalem, who was a priest of the God of the Highest Heaven, brought him bread and wine. Then Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing..." (Genesis 14:18).

"The Lord led you through the wilderness for forty years...feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown" (Dt 8:2).

### **Gospel Foreshadowing**

The miracle when Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1).

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves: with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus fed 5,000 men not counting the women and children present. At the end there were twelve baskets of scraps left over (Matthew 14:16-21).

On a second occasion, Jesus fed 4,000 men, besides the women and children, with seven loaves and one fish. There were seven baskets left over (Matthew 15:35).

### **Established by Jesus**

In John 6:48-71, Jesus explicitly describes the Eucharist. So explicit were His directions that some disciples left Him when they were told they must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life.

“Yes, I am the Bread of Life. When your fathers in the wilderness ate bread from the skies, they all died. But the Bread from Heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it. *I am that Living Bread* that came down from Heaven. Anyone eating this bread shall live forever; *this Bread is my flesh* given to redeem humanity.”

Then the Jews began arguing with each other about what he meant. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

So Jesus said it again. *"With all the earnestness I possess I tell you this: Unless you eat the flesh of the Messiah and drink his blood you cannot have eternal life within you. But anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the Last Day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Everyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood is in me and I in him. I live by the power of the living Father who sent me, and in the same way those who partake of me shall live because of me! I am the true Bread from Heaven; and anyone who eats this Bread shall live forever, and not die as your fathers did – though they ate bread from Heaven."*

Even his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. Who can tell what he means?"

Jesus knew within himself that his disciples were complaining and said to them, "Does this offend you?" ... At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going too?" (John 6:48-71).

Jesus established the Eucharist at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, the day before he was arrested and crucified. At the Last Supper Jesus took bread and asked God's blessing on it and broke it into pieces and gave it to them and said, "*Eat it—this is my body.*" He took the cup of wine and gave thanks, and he said to them, "*This is my blood, poured out for many, sealing the new agreement between God and man*" (Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; John 13:7-20; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26). All four Gospels tell the story of the Last Supper and Jesus' instituting the Eucharist.

### **Early Church**

“When we ask the Lord's blessing upon our drinking from the cup of wine at the Lord's table, this means, doesn't it, that all who drink from it are sharing together the blessings of *Christ's blood*? And when we break off the pieces of the bread from the loaf to eat together, this shows that we are sharing together in the benefits of *his body*" (1 Cor 10:16).

"They joined with the other believers in regular attendance at the Apostles' teachings sessions and at the Communion services" (Acts 2:42, 2:46, 20:7).

"Christ, God's Lamb, has been slain for us. So let us feast upon him and grow strong in the Christian life" (1 Cor 5:7).

### **The Sacrifice of the Mass**

When the Priest says the words, "this is my body...this is my blood," the bread and wine transform into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Himself. This is called "transubstantiation." The bread and wine are transformed into God the Infinite and Eternal Creator of the Universe.

In the Eucharist, Christ gives us the very body, which He gave up for us on the cross, and His blood that He poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. The victim is one and the same; only the manner of offering is different (Catechism 1365-67).

Compare Jesus' sacrifice to the way the Jews atoned for their sins during Jesus' time.

#### **Jewish Passover Sacrifice:**

A family traveled to the temple in Jerusalem once a year to celebrate Passover. They purchased an unblemished lamb for sacrifice. At the temple the priest would kill the lamb and sprinkle its blood onto the altar to atone for the family's sins. The family would complete the sacrifice by eating the body of the lamb during the Passover supper.

#### **Jesus' Sacrifice:**

Similarly, the high priests killed Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover feast. Jesus was God's perfect unblemished Lamb who was sacrificed to atone for all our sins, once and for all. The Apostles ate his body during the Passover meal, the Last Supper. We too partake in this same sacrifice, in a very real way, every time we consume Jesus' body during the mass. In fact, we refer to it as the *Sacrifice of the Mass*.

As a sacrifice, the Eucharist is offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead. Receiving the Eucharist cleanses us from our venial sins (Catechism 1414).

### **Effects of the Sacrament**

Intimate union with Jesus Christ. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56-57; Catechism 1391). Can you think of a way to get physically closer to Christ than actually to take Him into your body?

Food for our spiritual life: "Anyone eating this bread shall live forever; this Bread is my flesh given to redeem humanity. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink" (John 6:56-57). The growth of the Christian life needs the nourishment of the Eucharist, the bread for our pilgrimage here on earth (Catechism 1392).

Separates us from sin: The body of Christ was "given up for us," and the blood of Christ was "shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." The Eucharist wipes away venial sins and preserves us from future mortal sins (Catechism 1393-95).

The Eucharist makes the Church: Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens our incorporation into the Church, already achieved by baptism. All generations and every Church around the world share only one bread and one body (Catechism 1396, 1 Cor 10:17).

The Eucharist commits us to the poor: To receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we must recognize Christ in the poorest of the poor, his brethren (Catechism 397). God presents himself to us in a very humble and vulnerable way in the Eucharist. The Eucharist can help us to remain humble and reach out to help those in need.

### **The Rite**

The Holy Spirit converts the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus through the ministry of the ordained priest (*Teen Catechism* 94).

Since Christ is present under each of the species (bread and wine), communion under the species of bread alone makes it possible to receive all the fruits of the Eucharistic grace (Catechism 1390).

When we reply "Amen," we are saying, "I believe this is Jesus" (Catechism 1396).

We must be in a state of grace to receive communion. Anyone having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution from the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Catechism 1415).

We are obliged to receive communion at least once a year, but can receive it every day (Catechism 1417).

Because Christ Himself is present in the Eucharist, He is to be honored with the worship of adoration: genuflecting, exposition for public adoration, holy hours, etc. (Catechism 1418).

One should refrain from eating or drinking anything (except water) one hour before receiving the Holy Eucharist.

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

Some people view the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) in a negative light, but we will discuss how this sacrament can be a positive and healthy component of our spiritual life. It is a gift from God of which we should all take advantage.

Many of the Protestant Christian denominations did not continue practicing this sacrament when they broke away from the Catholic Church, and some people misunderstand and sometimes criticize this sacrament, so it is important to understand what we believe as Catholics and why.

### Effects of the Sacrament

Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sins, but baptism cannot be the Church's only means of using the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. The Church must be able to forgive all penitents their offenses, even if they should sin until the last moment of their lives (Catechism 979, 986). The Sacrament of Reconciliation provides the means to receive forgiveness of both mortal and venial sins committed after baptism.

Priests have received from God a power that He has given neither to angels nor to archangels. Let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift (Catechism 983).

We receive forgiveness for our sins through the following sacraments:

- *Baptism*: Original Sin and all other sins
- *Eucharist*: venial sins and strengthens us to combat temptation
- *Reconciliation*: mortal and venial sins committed after Baptism
- *Anointing of the sick*: if unable to obtain it through Reconciliation

### Scriptural Basis (Catechism 1441-1442)

Why do we believe priests have the power to forgive sins?

From the Holy Scripture we know that Jesus empowered priests to forgive sins on His behalf. Holy Scripture clearly shows that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins and that He gave this authority to the Apostles. Jesus then sent his Apostles so that forgiveness of sins could be preached to all nations.

#### 1. Christ has the authority to forgive sins.

Jesus told the paralyzed man lowered from the roof on a stretcher, "Son, your sins are forgiven...I the Messiah, have the authority on earth to forgive sins. But talk is cheap—anybody could say that. So I'll prove it to you by healing this man. Pick up your stretcher and go on home, for you are healed" (Mark 2:1-12).

Jesus told the woman who washed his feet with her tears, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48).

#### 2. Christ gave the authority to forgive sins to the Apostles.

"As the father has sent me (with full authority), so I am sending you.' He then breathed on them and told them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's

sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven” (John 20:21-23).

Christ sent his Apostles “so that repentance and forgiveness of sins could be preached in his name to all nations” (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor 5:18-20).

Jesus told his Apostles, “and I tell you this – whatever you bind on earth is bound in Heaven, and whatever you free on earth will be freed in Heaven” (*Matthew 18:18*).

The power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church (Catechism 553). This authority has been handed down from the Apostles through an unbroken line of bishops through the apostolic succession. (See the chapter on bishops and the pope.)

## **Early Church**

During the first centuries, Christians who committed grave sins after baptism (e.g., murder or adultery) had to do public penance, often for years, before receiving absolution. In certain regions this was allowed only once in a lifetime. During the seventh century Irish missionaries brought the “private” practice of penance to continental Europe. This new practice allowed repetition and so opened the way to regular frequenting of this sacrament. It allowed the forgiveness of grave sins and venial sins to be integrated into one sacramental celebration. This is the form of reconciliation that the Church has practiced to our day (Catechism 1447).

## **The Rite**

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). To receive God’s mercy, we must admit our faults (Catechism 1847). It is a sign of maturity to admit our faults and take responsibility for our actions. It is a sign of pride to not admit when we do something wrong and apologize.

Jesus told us that “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven” (Mark 3:29; Matthew 12:32; Luke 12:10). The Church defines this to mean that anyone who deliberately refuses to accept God’s mercy by repenting rejects the forgiveness of his sins and salvation (Catechism 1864). God respects our free will, so if we reject God’s forgiveness, how can He forgive us?

Lucky for us, God does not require that we never make a mistake. Aside from Jesus and Mary, nobody is perfect. If God wanted humans to be perfect, He would have created us that way. We do, however, need to ask for forgiveness and forgive those who hurt us. The saints were not perfect; they also sinned, but their reconciliation was complete.

Remember the four steps to forgiveness: confession (admit our faults and be sorry), act of contrition (verbally apologize), absolution (receive forgiveness), and penance (right the wrong). When we hurt other people or God, we need to take these four basic steps to set things right. These four steps provide the basis for a healthy relationship with God and other people. We must learn to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others. God is always ready to forgive us.

Verbal apologies are a necessary step not only with other people, but also with God. Confessing (admitting) our sins and then saying an act of contrition serves as our verbal apology to God. Through absolution, the priest, on God's behalf, accepts our apology.

Since God is always ready to forgive us, wouldn't it be wrong for us not to do the same for our neighbor? Read and discuss Matthew 18:23-35. Just as God is merciful towards us and is always ready to forgive and forget our sins, we should treat others the same way.

Afterwards, we realize that it is actually easier to ask for forgiveness and forgive than to leave the situation unaddressed. As long as the situation is left unresolved, we can experience guilt, tension, and pain.

Jesus also calls on us to not condemn others for their faults because we are sinners ourselves.

There are numerous reasons people do not participate in this important sacrament. Here are just a few:

- Embarrassed to tell a priest what they have done
- Believe that the process of forgiveness is only between them and God and should not involve a priest
- Their parish church does not offer confession at a convenient time
- No one else in their family goes
- They are friends with the parish priest
- Unwilling to admit their faults (because of pride)
- Justify their actions with excuses
- Feel so bad about what they did that they don't believe that God or a priest would forgive them

The Sacrament of Reconciliation involves the following steps...

### **Examination of Conscience: Recognize Our Faults**

Before making a good confession, we should spend time reflecting on the sins we have committed since our last confession. One way to examine our conscience is to read through the Ten Commandments from the previous chapter. If it helps, write down your sins on a piece of paper and bring it with you to confession.

### **Confession of Sins: Admit Our Faults and Be Sorry for What We Did**

Through confession man takes responsibility for his sins and asks for forgiveness and thereby opens himself again to God (Catechism 1455).

If a sick person is too ashamed to show his wounds to the doctor, the medicine cannot heal what it does not know (Catechism 1455-56).

It is often embarrassing to confess our sins, but remember there are no secrets; God already knows about every thought, word, and deed. Also remember that we are not saying anything that the priest has not already heard many times before. In fact, if we feel embarrassed about the sins we are confessing, then it is a good indication that we

are making a good confession. God already knows what you did. He saw you do it, even if it were "behind closed doors."

Even if we know the priest on a personal level, we should not be embarrassed to tell him our sins. He is bound to secrecy and will not think any less of us, as he knows that we are all sinners. He will be glad that you are participating in the sacrament and respect you more for it.

When we have done something to hurt a loved one, we carry a weight in our heart until we apologize. Even if we are sorry for what we did on the inside, the pain will not go away until we *verbally* say we are sorry and our loved one accepts our apology. Even though it is hard to apologize at times, it is harder to carry this pain around inside us.

Confession works the same way. We *verbally* tell the priest our sins (confession) and apologize (act of contrition). When the priest accepts our apology (absolution), a weight is lifted from our hearts. Why carry the weight of your sins inside? Get rid of them and be free. Confession actually relieves us of guilt and makes us feel better.

### **Act of Contrition: Verbally Apologize and Ask for Forgiveness**

To be contrite means to detest the sin committed and resolve not to do it again. The words in the Act of Contrition Prayer say basically this (Catechism 1451). Can we apologize to another person if we don't verbally apologize? We do not heal wounds by only being sorry for what we did; we must also say, "I am sorry." The Act of Contrition is our verbal apology to God

There are two forms of contrition:

- *Perfect Contrition*: arises because we love God so much that we are truly sorry for having hurt him
- *Imperfect Contrition*: arises from fear of eternal damnation and other penalties threatening the sinner

### **Absolution: Receive Forgiveness**

Since Christ entrusted to his Apostles the ministry of reconciliation, their successors, the bishop and priests, continue to exercise this ministry. Priests, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, have the power to forgive all sins. In effect, the priest is accepting our apology on God's behalf (Catechism 1461).

Is the forgiveness process complete when the other person does not give you any indication whether they accepted your apology or not, leaving you to wonder? Similarly, do you think it is a good thing that Jesus left someone on earth to accept our apology on His behalf?

Sometimes when someone has done something bad, they find it hard to believe that God will forgive them and are not really sure if He does, but if we go to confession and the priest gives us absolution, then we can have 100% confidence that we are forgiven by God (John 20:21-23; Matthew 18:18). We can put the event behind us, relieve ourselves of the weight in our heart, and move on with our lives.

The bishop or priest:

1. Forgives sins through absolution
2. Determines the manner of satisfaction/penance

Confession can also be a private time between you, God, and the priest to talk about something that might be bothering you or to ask for guidance or advice. Often people view confession in a negative way and dislike going, but, actually, confession can be a refreshing experience and an opportunity for you to ask a priest for advice or to talk to someone about what is bothering you. If you have any questions or are struggling with something on which you would like a priest's advice, take this opportunity to have a private and confidential conversation with your priest. He is there to help you.

### **Satisfaction or Penance: Right the Wrong**

Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. The sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin. First of all, one must do what is possible to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of one slandered) (Catechism 1459).

Secondly, we are called to interior penance, a return or a conversion to God with all our heart. This entails the desire and resolution to change one's life (Catechism 1431).

Ways to express interior penance (Catechism 1434-39):

- *Tears of repentance*: truly being sorry when we hurt God or others
- *Fasting*: denying ourselves certain pleasures to show God that He is more important to us than other things in our lives
- *Acceptance of suffering*: Jesus' greatest "I love you" was from the cross
- *Reconciliation* with one's neighbor: apologize and accept another's apology
- *Prayer*: spending time with God
- *Almsgiving*: acts of charity for those in need
- *Making changes in your life*: choosing God's way versus the world's
- *Nourishment in the Eucharist*: to feed our soul
- *Reading Sacred Scripture*: listening to God
- *Receiving spiritual direction*: from a priest, youth group, parents, etc.

When we fast or deny ourselves certain pleasures, we prove to God that He means more to us than physical satisfaction.

### **Consequences of Sin**

Mortal sin, if unforgiven, deprives us of eternal life in Heaven. Every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment, which must be purified here on earth (four steps of forgiveness) or after death in Purgatory (Catechism 1472).

### **Clarifications**

We are bound to confess mortal sins at least once a year. We must confess mortal sins before receiving Communion.

Confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is strongly encouraged. It helps us form a good conscience and fight evil tendencies (Catechism 1458).

We should verbally confess all mortal sins, but we do not have to list each venial sin.

If we commit a mortal sin, tell God we are sorry, and resolve to go to confession as soon as possible, then we are forgiven before we celebrate the sacrament. We should not receive communion until after reconciliation.

We are obliged to go to confession only if we are conscious of having committed mortal sin (*Catholic Replies* 200).

## Confession Procedure

1. Upon entering, make the sign of the cross and say:

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

2. **Confess** your sins.

**“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been \_\_\_\_\_  
(days/weeks/months) since my last confession.”**

**Confess your sins.**

3. The priest may give you advice and tell you your **penance**. The priest then asks you to say an Act of Contrition.

4. Say the **act of contrition** that you have memorized or the following:

**"Oh, my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you.  
I detest all my sins because of your just punishment,  
but most of all because they offend you, my God,  
who is all good and deserving of all my love.  
I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace,  
to sin no more and avoid the near occasion of sin.  
Amen."**

5. The priest then extends his hands over your head and pronounces the **absolution**. If there are people waiting in line, some priests may say the absolution at the same time you are saying your act of contrition.

6. When he finishes the absolution, you reply:

**"Amen."**

The priest *may* say: “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.”

You *can* reply, **"His mercy endures forever."**

The priest *may* dismiss you by saying, “Go in peace.”

You *can* reply: **"Thank you, Father."**

## **Sacrament of Anointing the Sick**

### **Effects of the Sacrament**

The recipient of this sacrament will receive:

1. The Holy Spirit, who renews faith in God, strengthens against discouragement (courage to overcome the difficulties of the illness), and heals the soul
2. Forgiveness of sins
3. Strength to unite oneself to Christ's Passion (Catechism 1520-23)

This Sacrament is not as much about asking for a miracle cure, as it is about asking for the Holy Spirit to give us strength to follow God's will.

### **Scriptural Basis**

#### **Established by Jesus**

Jesus had the power to heal the sick and performed many healing miracles during his public ministry.

- Matthew 8:3, 8:13, 8:15, 8:32, 9:2-7, 9:22, 9:25, 9:29, 9:33, 12:13, 12:22, 15:28, 17:18, 20:34, 26:51
- Mark 1:25, 1:31, 1:41, 2:5, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:29, 5:34, 5:41, 6:56, 7:29, 7:32, 8:22, 9:17, 10:46, 14:47
- Luke 4:35-39, 4:39, 5:20-25, 6:10, 6:19, 7:10, 7:14, 8:33, 8:44, 8:54, 9:2, 11:14, 13:10, 14:4, 18:42, 22:50
- John 4:50, 5:8, 9:1-41, 11:43, 18:10

Jesus gave this power to the Apostles:

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure the lepers, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received" (Matthew 10:8; Catechism 1509).

"In my name...they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

### **Early Church**

"So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to turn from sin. And they cast out many demons, and healed many sick people, anointing them with oil" (Mark 6:12).

"Peter said to him, 'Aeneas! Jesus Christ has healed you! Get up and make your bed.' And he was healed instantly. The Apostles did many miracles" (Acts 9:34, 2:43).

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15; Catechism 1510).

## **Faith and Suffering**

But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of an illness (Catechism 1508).

Only God knows what is best for us. Not recovering from an illness may be the best possible outcome for us, even though we may not see it at the time. We must keep our perspective on eternity and ask that God's will be done. No one can escape the fact that our life here on earth will come to an end; it is only a question of when. We may not always like God's timing, but we must have faith that He knows what is best for all of us.

We can offer our suffering as a sign of love to God. Paul said, "Part of my work is to suffer for you" (Colossians 1:24).

### **The Rite (Catechism 1514-16)**

Bishops and priests can administer this sacrament. They lay hands on the sick and pray over them. They then anoint them with oil blessed by the bishop.

As soon as anyone begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, they can receive this sacrament.

If the sick person recovers his health, he can in the case of another grave illness receive this sacrament again. Also, the sacrament can be repeated for the same illness.

It is fitting to receive this sacrament prior to a serious operation.

We should encourage the sick to call for a priest to receive this sacrament.

# Sacrament of Matrimony

## Effects of the Sacrament

Marriage is for the good of the couple and the procreation and education of children (Catechism 1601).

The mutual consent of the spouses is sealed by God Himself. Thus the marriage bond has been established by God Himself in such a way that it can never be dissolved (Catechism 1639-40).

Marriage is a lifelong contract. One should not get married just to see "if things work out" (*Faith and Morals* 45).

The couple receives grace from Christ to (Catechism 1642):

- Take up their crosses and follow Jesus
- Forgive one another
- Rise again after they have fallen
- Bear one another's burdens
- Love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love

The marriage union can be threatened by these sins (Catechism 1606):

- Spirit of domination
- Infidelity
- Jealousy
- Conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation

## Scriptural Basis

### Old Testament

"She is part of my own bone and flesh. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife in such a way that the two become one person" (Gen 2:23-24).

### Established by Jesus

Jesus' first public miracle was at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11).

"No man may divorce what God has joined together...And I tell you this, that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery" (Matthew 19:6-9). Jesus repeats this command that divorce is not allowed in three other places in the Gospels (Matthew 5:31; Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:18).

## **Early Church**

"Now, for those who are married I have a command, *not just a suggestion*...the Lord himself said: A wife must not leave her husband, and the husband must not divorce his wife" (1 Cor 7:10-11).

"The wife is part of her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, then she may marry again" (1 Cor 7:39).

"When a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive" (Romans 7:2).

"And you husbands show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the Church when he died for her" (Eph 5:25).

"A man must love his wife as part of himself; and the wife must see to it that she deeply respects her husband" (Eph 5:33).

## **The Rite**

Marriage is a lifelong commitment; it is for a lifetime. Don't rush into this decision, and don't feel obligated to get married by a certain age.

The spouses mutually confer upon each other the Sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the church. The Holy Spirit is the seal of their covenant (Catechism 1623-24).

The bishop, priest, or deacon assists at the celebration, acts as a witness, and gives the blessing of the Church. The marriage should be celebrated in the public liturgy of the Church (Catechism 1630-31).

Both man and woman must freely consent to the marriage, free from coercion (Catechism 1625-28).

Some marriages are made in Heaven, but they all have to be maintained on earth. Marriage is not always easy, but divorce can be harder.

## Bishops and the Pope

Nicene Creed: "I believe in one holy catholic and *apostolic* Church."

"Apostolic" basically means that the authority of the Catholic Church is based upon an unbroken line of bishops and popes that goes back to Christ himself. Refer to the list of popes at the end of this chapter.

We belong to the church that Jesus Himself established, rather than one founded by another man.

The Church governs through the successors to Peter and the Apostles. The Church is indestructible and infallibly upholds the truth (Catechism 869).

Christ entrusted certain authority to Peter, the first pope, and to the Apostles, the first bishops. The Apostles then handed down their authority to the future bishops. If Christ did not leave someone in charge here on earth and a means to hand down that authority, then the Church would have had no foundation on which to grow and survive throughout the centuries (Romans 13: 1-2).

If a teacher or boss tells us to do some work, we may not agree with it, but we are obligated to do it, because it is within the teacher or boss's authority to assign us work. If on the other hand, a teacher or boss tells us whom we should be friends with, we might reply, "Mind your own business; you have no right to tell me that."

With respect to religion, is it not important to understand what authority a religious leader has to tell us to do something, such as to follow the Ten Commandments?

Through Apostolic Succession, we believe that the pope and bishops have the authority to make judgments on matters of faith and morals. Jesus left them in charge to make judgments on His behalf. We also believe that the Catholic Church's teachings on issues of faith and morals have always been correct, because the Church receives its holiness from God and thus cannot lead us astray. This is called the "infallibility" of the Church.

### Infallibility

In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the Apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in His own infallibility. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals (Catechism 889-90).

Infallibility is a guarantee that we are receiving the true faith without error when:

- The pope proclaims a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals
- The body of bishops, together with the pope, propose a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed," especially in an ecumenical council
- The bishops in communion with the pope propose a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals (Catechism 890-92)

The Bible does not address every issue that has or will confront society (e.g., abortion). Someone needs to make a ruling on issues of faith and morals that are not explicitly addressed in the Bible. The Church has been given the authority to do this and has carried out this duty (Matthew 18:18, 28:18-20).

There have been numerous ecumenical councils throughout the centuries that have played an important role in growing and defining our Catholic faith. Refer to the list of councils at the end of this chapter.

"When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Infallibility is a guarantee that the Church will never lead us astray. Said another way, God will find fault with no one for following the Catholic Church. That same guarantee may not necessarily be there for those who strike out on their own.

What an individual believes to be true does not necessarily change reality, but what the popes and bishops proclaim as true is upheld as true in the eyes of God.

### **Scriptural Basis**

Why do we believe in Apostolic Succession and infallibility? In the Bible we clearly see that Jesus established this when he instituted His Church. Why do we believe Jesus? We believe Jesus, because He is God.

The Apostolic Succession can be summarized as follows:

1. Christ chose the Apostles.
2. Christ entrusted certain authority to the Apostles, the first bishops.
3. Christ entrusted specific authority to Peter, the first pope.
4. The Church was built on the foundation of the Apostles.
5. The Apostles handed down their authority to the future bishops.

### **Christ chose the Apostles**

Christ chose the Apostles to be leaders of His new Church; the Apostles were not self-appointed leaders. Not all of Christ's followers were extended this same invitation.

"At daybreak Jesus called together his followers and chose twelve of them to be the inner circle of his disciples. They were appointed as his Apostles" (Luke 6:13).

"One day Jesus called together his twelve Apostles and gave them authority over all demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them away to tell everyone about the coming of the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:1).

### **Christ Entrusted Certain Authority to the Apostles, Who Were the First Bishops**

Anyone can make a claim (e.g., abortion is not wrong), but what guarantee does that person have that their claim is true? Christ gave the Apostles this guarantee (infallibility).

"And I tell you this - whatever you bind on earth is bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

The power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to:

- Forgive sins
- Make judgments on issues of faith and morals
- Make disciplinary decisions in the Church (Catechism 553)

We know that Jesus had many disciples, at least seventy-two (Luke 10:1-17), but He did not give this authority to all His disciples, only to the twelve Apostles, who were the first leaders of the church, the first bishops.

### **Christ Entrusted Specific Authority to Peter, the First Pope**

Christ told Peter three things that he did not tell the other Apostles, thereby singling him out as the leader of the Apostles:

1. “[Peter] you are ‘Rock,’ and on this rock I will build my Church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).
2. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 16:19).
3. Jesus confirmed this mandate to Peter after his resurrection: “Simon, do you love me more than these others...then feed my lambs...then take care of my sheep...then feed my little sheep” (John 21:15-17).

Peter alone was (Catechism 880-883):

- Designated the Rock (foundation) on which Christ will build his church
- Given the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, the authority to govern the Church
- Instituted as shepherd (leader) of the whole flock (Catechism 881).

The “power of the keys” designates authority to govern the house of God (Catechism 553).

What is the one thing that the Roman Catholic Church has that no other religion does? Answer: the pope. A number of other Christian churches validly partake in the same sacraments as the Roman Catholic Church.

### **The Church Was Built on the Foundation of the Apostles**

As Roman Catholics, we belong to the church that Jesus Himself founded, rather than a mere man.

“Because my Father has granted me a Kingdom, I, here and now, grant you the right to eat and drink at my table in that Kingdom; and you (Apostles) will sit on the thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30).

“Those who welcome you are welcoming me. Those who reject you are rejecting me.” (Luke 10:16).

“What a foundation you stand on now: [it is based on] the Apostles and the prophets and the cornerstone of the building is Jesus Christ himself” (Ephesians 2:20).

Referring to the vision of the glorious New Jerusalem: "The walls had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb" (Rev 21:14).

### **The Apostles Handed Down Their Teaching Authority to the Future Bishops**

Christ's Church did not die with his Apostles, but was handed down through the generations through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

"Then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this - that I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

"They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death other proven men should take over their ministry" (St Clement of Rome, Catechism 861).

In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority (Catechism 77).

The bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the Apostles as pastors of the Church, in such a way that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ (Catechism 862).

The Church is upheld infallibly in the truth. Christ governs her through Peter and the other Apostles, who are present in their successors, the pope and the college of bishops (Catechism 869).

The Catholic Church has an unbroken line of bishops and popes that goes back to Jesus and the Apostles themselves (refer to the list of popes).

### **The Church Is Indestructible**

"[Peter,] you are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"Then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this---that I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

The Church is the sinless one made up of sinners. The Church derives its holiness from God, not from man (Catechism 867).

Not all of the church leaders in the past or present have been holy. The Church has not canonized all the popes as saints. The mere fact that the Church has survived the corruption of some of its members proves that the Church's holiness is not subject to its members. If the survival of the Church were left up to the works of man, it would have perished long ago, but since it comes from God, man cannot destroy it.

## List of Popes

<b>1</b> St Peter	(32-67)	<b>51</b> St. Symmachus	(498-514)	<b>101</b> Valentine	(827)
<b>2</b> St. Linus	(67-76)	<b>52</b> St. Hormisdas	(514-23)	<b>102</b> Gregory IV	(827-44)
<b>3</b> St, Anacletus (Cletus)	(76-88)	<b>53</b> St. John I	(523-26)	<b>103</b> Sergius II	(844-47)
<b>4</b> St. Clement	(88-97)	<b>54</b> St. Felix IV	(526-30)	<b>104</b> St. Leo IV	(847-55)
<b>5</b> St. Evaristus	(97-105)	<b>55</b> Boniface II	(530-32)	<b>105</b> Benedict III	(855-58)
<b>6</b> St. Alexander	(105-15)	<b>56</b> John II	(533-35)	<b>106</b> St. Nicholas I	(858-67)
<b>7</b> St. Sixtus I	(115-25)	<b>57</b> St. Agapetus I	(535-36)	<b>107</b> Adrian II	(867-72)
<b>8</b> St. Telesphorus	(125-36)	<b>58</b> St. Silverius	(536-37)	<b>108</b> John VIII	(872-82)
<b>9</b> St. Hyginus	(136-40)	<b>59</b> Vigilius	(537-55)	<b>109</b> Marinus I	(882-84)
<b>10</b> St. Pius	(140-55)	<b>60</b> Pelagius I	(55-61)	<b>110</b> St. Adrian III	(884-85)
<b>11</b> St. Anicetus	(155-66)	<b>61</b> John III	(561-74)	<b>111</b> Stephen VI	(885-91)
<b>12</b> St. Soter	(166-75)	<b>62</b> Benedict I	(575-79)	<b>112</b> Formosus	(891-96)
<b>13</b> St. Eleutherius	(175-89)	<b>63</b> Pelagius II	(579-90)	<b>113</b> Boniface VI	(896)
<b>14</b> St. Victor	(189-99)	<b>64</b> St. Gregory I	(590-604)	<b>114</b> Stephen VII	(896-97)
<b>15</b> St. Zephyrinus	(100-217)	<b>65</b> Sabinian	(604-6)	<b>115</b> Romanus	(897)
<b>16</b> St. Callistus I	(217-22)	<b>66</b> Boniface III	(607)	<b>116</b> Theodore II	(897)
<b>17</b> St. Urban I	(222-30)	<b>67</b> St. Boniface IV	(608-15)	<b>117</b> John IX	(898-900)
<b>18</b> St. Pontain	(230-35)	<b>68</b> St. Deusdedit	(615-18)	<b>118</b> Benedict IV	(900-03)
<b>19</b> St. Anterus	(235-36)	<b>69</b> Boniface V	(619-25)	<b>119</b> Leo V	(903)
<b>20</b> St. Fabian	(236-50)	<b>70</b> Honorius I	(625-38)	<b>120</b> Sergius III	(904-11)
<b>21</b> St. Cornelius	(251-53)	<b>71</b> Severinus	(640)	<b>121</b> Anastasius III	(911-13)
<b>22</b> St. Lucius I	(253-54)	<b>72</b> John IV	(640-42)	<b>122</b> Lando	(913-14)
<b>23</b> St. Stephen I	(254-57)	<b>73</b> Theodore I	(642-49)	<b>123</b> John X	(914-28)
<b>24</b> St. Sixtus II	(257-58)	<b>74</b> St. Martin I	(649-55)	<b>124</b> Leo VI	(928)
<b>25</b> St. Dionysius	(260-68)	<b>75</b> St. Eugene I	(655-57)	<b>125</b> Stephen VIII	(929-31)
<b>26</b> St. Felix I	(269-74)	<b>76</b> St. Vitalian	(657-72)	<b>126</b> John XI	(931-35)
<b>27</b> St. Eutychian	(275-83)	<b>77</b> Adeodatus II	(672-76)	<b>127</b> Leo VII	(936-39)
<b>28</b> St. Caius	(283-96)	<b>78</b> Donus	(676-78)	<b>128</b> Stephen IX	(939-42)
<b>29</b> St. Marcellinus	(296-304)	<b>79</b> St. Agatho	(678-81)	<b>129</b> Marinus II	(942-46)
<b>30</b> St. Marcellus I	(308-09)	<b>80</b> St. Leo II	(682-83)	<b>130</b> Agapetus II	(946-55)
<b>31</b> St. Eusebius	(309/310)	<b>81</b> St. Benedict II	(684-85)	<b>131</b> John XII	(955-63)
<b>32</b> St. Miltiades	(311-14)	<b>82</b> John V	(685-86)	<b>132</b> Leo VIII	(963-64)
<b>33</b> St. Sylvester	(314-35)	<b>83</b> Conon	(686-87)	<b>133</b> Benedict V	(964)
<b>34</b> St. Marcus	(336)	<b>84</b> St. Sergius I	(687-701)	<b>134</b> John XIII	(965-72)
<b>35</b> St. Julius I	(337-52)	<b>85</b> John VI	(701-5)	<b>135</b> Benedict VI	(973-74)
<b>36</b> Liberius	(352-66)	<b>86</b> John VII	(706-7)	<b>136</b> Benedict VII	(974-83)
<b>37</b> St. Damasus	(366-83)	<b>87</b> Sisinnius	(708)	<b>137</b> John XIV	(983-84)
<b>38</b> St. Siricius	(384-99)	<b>88</b> Constantine	(708-15)	<b>138</b> John XV	(985-96)
<b>39</b> St. Anastasius	(399-401)	<b>89</b> St. Gregory II	(715-31)	<b>139</b> Gregory V	(996-99)
<b>40</b> St. Innocent	(401-17)	<b>90</b> St. Gregory III	(731-41)	<b>140</b> Sylvester II	(999-1003)
<b>41</b> St. Zosimus	(417-18)	<b>91</b> St. Zachary	(741-52)	<b>141</b> John XVII	(1003)
<b>42</b> St. Boniface I	(418-22)	<b>92</b> Stephen II	(752)	<b>142</b> John XVIII	(1003-09)
<b>43</b> St. Celestine I	(422-32)	<b>93</b> Stephen III	(752-57)	<b>143</b> Sergius IV	(1009-12)
<b>44</b> St. Sixtus III	(432-40)	<b>94</b> St. Paul I	(757-67)	<b>144</b> Benedict VIII	(1012-24)
<b>45</b> St. Leo I	(440-61)	<b>95</b> Stephen IV	(767-72)	<b>145</b> John XIX	(1024-32)
<b>46</b> St. Hilarius	(461-68)	<b>96</b> Adrian I	(772-95)	<b>146</b> Benedict IX	(1032-45)
<b>47</b> St. Simplicius	(468-83)	<b>97</b> St. Leo III	(795-816)	<b>147</b> Sylvester III	(1045)
<b>48</b> St. Felix III	(483-92)	<b>98</b> Stephen V	(816-17)	<b>148</b> Benedict IX	(1045)
<b>49</b> St. Gelasius	(492-96)	<b>99</b> St. Paschal I	(817-24)	<b>149</b> Gregory VI	(1045-46)
<b>50</b> Anastasius	(496-98)	<b>100</b> Eugene II	(824-27)	<b>150</b> Clement II	(1046-47)

<b>151</b> Benedict IX	(1047-48)	<b>191</b> Honorius IV	(1285-87)	<b>231</b> Innocent IX	(1591)
<b>152</b> Damasus II	(1048)	<b>192</b> Nicholas IV	(1288-92)	<b>232</b> Clement VIII	(1592-1605)
<b>153</b> St. Leo IX	(1049-54)	<b>193</b> St. Celestine V	(1294)	<b>233</b> Leo XI	(1605)
<b>154</b> Victor II	(1055-57)	<b>194</b> Boniface VIII	(1294-1303)	<b>234</b> Paul V	(1605-21)
<b>155</b> Stephen X	(1057-58)	<b>195</b> Benedict XI	(1303-04)	<b>235</b> Gregory XV	(1621-23)
<b>156</b> Nicholas II	(1058-61)	<b>196</b> Clement V	(1305-14)	<b>236</b> Urban VIII	(1623-44)
<b>157</b> Alexander II	(1061-73)	<b>197</b> John XXII	(1316-34)	<b>237</b> Innocent X	(1644-55)
<b>158</b> St. Gregory VII	(1073-85)	<b>198</b> Benedict XII	(1334-42)	<b>238</b> Alexander VII	(1655-67)
<b>159</b> Blessed Victor III	(1086-87)	<b>199</b> Clement VI	(1342-52)	<b>239</b> Clement IX	(1667-69)
<b>160</b> Blessed Urban II	(1088-99)	<b>200</b> Innocent VI	(1352-62)	<b>240</b> Clement X	(1670-76)
<b>161</b> Paschal II	(1099-1118)	<b>201</b> Blessed Urban V	(1362-70)	<b>241</b> Innocent XI	(1676-89)
<b>162</b> Belasius II	(1118-19)	<b>202</b> Gregory XI	(1370-78)	<b>242</b> Alexander VIII	(1689-91)
<b>163</b> Callistus II	(1119-24)	<b>203</b> Urban VI	(1378-89)	<b>243</b> Innocent XII	(1691-1700)
<b>164</b> Honorius II	(1124-30)	<b>204</b> Boniface IX	(1389-1404)	<b>244</b> Clement XI	(1700-21)
<b>165</b> Innocent II	(1130-43)	<b>205</b> Innocent VII	(1406)	<b>245</b> Innocent XIII	(1721-24)
<b>166</b> Celestine II	(1143-44)	<b>206</b> Gregory XII	(1406-15)	<b>246</b> Benedict XIII	(1724-30)
<b>167</b> Lucius II	(1144-45)	<b>207</b> Martin V	(1417-31)	<b>247</b> Clement XII	(1730-40)
<b>168</b> Eugene III	(1145-53)	<b>208</b> Eugene IV	(1431-47)	<b>248</b> Benedict XIV	(1740-58)
<b>169</b> Anastasius IV	(1153-54)	<b>209</b> Nicholas V	(1447-55)	<b>249</b> Clement XIII	(1758-69)
<b>170</b> Adrian IV	(1154-59)	<b>210</b> Callistus III	(1445-58)	<b>250</b> Clement XIV	(1769-74)
<b>171</b> Alexander III	(1159-81)	<b>211</b> Pius II	(1458-64)	<b>251</b> Pius VI	(1775-99)
<b>172</b> Lucius III	(1181-85)	<b>212</b> Paul II	(1464-71)	<b>252</b> Pius VII	(1800-23)
<b>173</b> Urban III	(1185-87)	<b>213</b> Sixtus IV	(1471-84)	<b>253</b> Leo XII	(1823-29)
<b>174</b> Gregory VIII	(1187)	<b>214</b> Innocent VIII	(1484-92)	<b>254</b> Pius VIII	(1829-30)
<b>175</b> Clement III	(1187-91)	<b>215</b> Alexander VI	(1492-1503)	<b>255</b> Gregory XVI	(1831-46)
<b>176</b> Celestine III	(1191-98)	<b>216</b> Pius III	(1503)	<b>256</b> Ven. Pius IX	(1846-78)
<b>177</b> Innocent III	(1198-1216)	<b>217</b> Julius II	(1503-13)	<b>257</b> Leo XIII	(1878-1903)
<b>178</b> Honorius III	(1216-27)	<b>218</b> Leo X	(1513-21)	<b>258</b> St. Pius X	(1903-14)
<b>179</b> Gregory IX	(1227-41)	<b>219</b> Adrian VI	(1522-23)	<b>259</b> Benedict XV	(1914-22)
<b>180</b> Celestine IV	(1241)	<b>220</b> Clement VII	(1523-34)	<b>260</b> Pius XI	(1922-39)
<b>181</b> Innocent IV	(1243-54)	<b>221</b> Paul III	(1534-49)	<b>261</b> Pius XII	(1939-58)
<b>182</b> Alexander IV	(1254-61)	<b>222</b> Julius III	(1550-55)	<b>262</b> John XXIII	(1958-63)
<b>183</b> Urban IV	(1261-64)	<b>223</b> Marcellus II	(1555)	<b>263</b> Paul VI	(1963-78)
<b>184</b> Clement IV	(1265-68)	<b>224</b> Paul IV	(1555-59)	<b>264</b> John Paul I	(1978)
<b>185</b> Gregory X	(1271-76)	<b>225</b> Pius IV	(1559-65)	<b>265</b> John Paul II	(1978-2005)
<b>186</b> Innocent V	(1276)	<b>226</b> St. Pius V	(1566-72)	<b>266</b> Benedict XVI	(2005-pres)
<b>187</b> Adrian V	(1276)	<b>227</b> Gregory XIII	(1572-85)		
<b>188</b> John XXI	(1276-77)	<b>228</b> Sixtus V	(1585-90)		
<b>189</b> Nicholas III	(1277-80)	<b>229</b> Urban VII	(1590)		
<b>190</b> Martin IV	(1281-85)	<b>230</b> Gregory XIV	(1590-91)		

## **Some of the Church's Ecumenical Councils**

	<b>Year</b>
Jerusalem	~50
Nicaea I	325
Constantinople I	381
Rome	382
Carthage	418
Ephesus	431
Chalcedon	451
Orange II	529
Constantinople	543
Constantinople II	553
Braga I	561
Toledo IV	633
Toledo VI	638
Latern	649
Toledo XI	675
Constantinople III	680
Toledo XVI	693
Rome	745
Nicaea II	787
Friuli	796
Quiercy	853
Constantinople IV	869
Lateran IV	1215
Lyons II	1274
Vienne	1311
Constance	1414
Florence	1439
Lateran V	1512
Trent	1545
Vatican I	1869
Vatican II	1962

*(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 630-634).*

# Sacrament of Holy Orders

## Effects of the Sacrament

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to His Apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time (Catechism 1536). It is the means by which the Church has carried out the Apostolic Succession.

In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority. The bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the Apostles as pastors of the Church, in such a way that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ (Catechism 77, 862).

There are three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders: deacon, priest, and bishop (Catechism 1554).

Deacon is the lowest level of the hierarchy. They can:

- Assist in the celebration of the Eucharist and distribution of Holy Communion
- Bless marriages
- Preside over funerals
- Preach and proclaim the Gospel

Married men can become deacons, but if their wife dies, they cannot re-marry (Catechism 1570).

Priests are the co-workers of the bishops. They can administer all the sacraments except the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Catechism 1595).

Bishops receive the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular church entrusted to him (Catechism 1559).

- Cardinals are bishops that have a designated role to elect a new pope.
- The pope is the Bishop of Rome.
- Peter was the first Bishop of Rome.

## Scriptural Basis

Refer to the chapter on "Bishops and the Pope" for the scriptural basis for Holy Orders.

## The Rite

It is for the bishops as the successors of the Apostles to hand on the apostolic line. Only the bishops can confer the three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The sacrament is conferred by a laying on of hands, and thus there is an unbroken physical link that goes back to the Apostles themselves (Catechism 1576, 1597).

If a bishop breaks away from the Church to start his own denomination, this new church could possess and hand down from generation to generation all seven sacraments. If a priest leaves the church in a similar fashion, some of the sacraments will die with him.

Only a baptized man can receive this sacrament. The Lord Jesus chose men to be Apostles. The Apostles did the same and chose men to follow them. The Church recognizes herself bound by this choice made by Jesus Himself (Catechism 1577).

Just as Christ chose the Apostles, no one has *the right* to receive this sacrament. No one can claim this office for himself. Only the Church has the authority to administer this order (Catechism 1578).

Except for deacons, the ordained ministers live a celibate life (Catechism 1579). Jesus made the following challenge, "some refuse to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone who can, accept my statement" (Matthew 19:12). Christ called certain people to devote 100% of their life to God (sisters, monks). Should not His priests and bishops, as leaders of the Church, show as much devotion?

The Sacrament of Holy Orders confers an imprint that cannot be removed (Catechism 1582). If a priest quits the priesthood, he still retains his ordained powers.

### **Vocations to the Priesthood**

The Catholic Church in the United States has experienced a 34% growth since the mid-1960s, increasing to about 60 million. But during this same time period, the number of priests has shrunk by 20%, with the national average age of diocesan priests in the year 2000 at 57 years old.<sup>1</sup>

According to the 2,000 study done by the US Bishops, 27% of US parishes do not have a resident priest. An estimated 58,000 parishes and 112,000 mission stations worldwide are without a priest according to the 1997 *Vatican Statistical Yearbook*.<sup>2</sup>

There is hope on the horizon. In the 1990s ordinations in the United States have risen to about six hundred per year, a 20% increase over the 1980s. Africa, Asia, and Latin America have seen a rapid rise in the number of seminarians. With more than one hundred thousand seminarians worldwide, the Catholic Church has almost twice as many priestly candidates as it did in 1978, when Pope John Paul II was elected pope.<sup>3</sup>

1. <http://freeweb.mcleodusa.net/~hinzdocs/shortage.htm>

2. <http://www.futurechurch.org/priestshortage.shtml>

3. <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Crisis/Oct96/quinn.html>

# History of the Catholic Church

## Introduction

History is a discussion of events that occurred over time, but God is infinite, and He is not subject to time. “Infinite” is a big word. It is hard (impossible) for us to visualize something that has no limits, but let’s try. Our *infinite* God is simultaneously aware of everything that is going on with every molecule in the whole universe at any given moment, from the farthest star to our innermost thoughts. He is simultaneously listening to the thoughts of seven billion people on earth. He could tell you exactly where every molecule has been each day for the last 13.7 billion years, from the time He created it out of nothing, and there are millions of molecules in your fingertip alone. Our *infinite* God is without limit, so there is nowhere that He does not exist, except for Hell.

With respect to God, it does not matter how old the universe is because our *infinite* God is not subject to time. He sees the creation of the universe 13.7 billion years ago at the same time that He sees us sitting here today. God is watching Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross at the same time that He is watching us live our lives. As such, units of measure of time (whether minutes, days, years, or billions of years) cannot be used to understand or describe how God acts. Our *infinite* God has always existed, and for all we know, this might be the one-millionth universe that He has created.

We are finite creatures who live in a three-dimensional universe\*, which is governed by time (a fourth dimension), so we experience and understand things in chronological order. Man uses history and science to estimate when certain events occurred. This can help us put into perspective where we are (and how small we actually are) within God’s wondrous creation.

\*A line has one dimension (length), and a plane (e.g., piece of paper) has two dimensions (length and width). Something that has length, width, and height (everything in the visible world around us) has three dimensions. It is possible that there are more dimensions in God’s creation, but we currently live in four (length, width, height, and time). Just like God, our souls are not bound by this four-dimensional universe. As such, science is unable to detect our soul or track its movements after we die. One day our soul will move beyond this four-dimensional world.

There is sound scientific evidence for the timeline of God’s process to create our universe. It took God 13.7 billion years to build this earth and the beautiful nature that surrounds us. It would be a mistake to conclude that scientific evidence on the history of the world contradicts the Bible or the teachings of the Church. We do not have to choose between science and religion, as science is simply the study of God’s beautiful creation. When we study the past, we find evidence of God’s incredible handiwork in creating the universe, life, and ultimately the human race. None of this evidence contradicts what we believe as Catholics.

## History before Christ (Father Schineller)

- God created the universe (the Big Bang): 13.7 billion years ago
- Formation of the first galaxies: 10 billion years ago
- Formation of our sun, and solar system: 5 billion years ago
- Formation of planet earth: 4.6 billion years ago
- Origin of life on earth, the first living cells: 3.5 billion years ago

- First sea life and fish in the ocean: 550 million years ago
- First plants and vegetation on land: 400 million years ago
- Age of reptiles: 300 million years ago
- Age of the dinosaurs: 230 million years ago
- Age of the first birds: 150 million years ago
- Age of the first apes and monkeys: 35 million years ago
- First humans (homo habilis): 2.6 million years ago
- Homo erectus using tools: 1 million years ago
- Homo sapiens' use of language: 80,000 years ago
- Last Ice Age: 12,000 BC
- First cities: 10,000 BC

### **Adam and Eve: ~4000 BC – Humans Know and Begin Worshiping the One True God**

- Flourishing of civilization in Egypt: ~3,000 BC
- Abraham and the Patriarchs: ~1,900 BC
- Moses and the coming of the Israelites out of Egypt: ~1,300 BC
- Anointing of King David: ~1,000 BC
- Prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah: 750 BC
- Founding of the city of Rome: 752 BC
- Poet Homer: 700 BC
- Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle: 450 BC
- Roman Empire led by Caesar Augustus: 31 BC

### **Jesus is Born**

Jesus lived for about thirty-three years. His life is recounted in the four Gospels.

- Jesus dies on the cross and rises from the dead: 33 AD

The Old Testament recounts the story of salvation for the human race, which begins with Adam and Eve and is made perfect and complete with the birth and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There were other humans who walked this earth before Adam and Eve, but God created Adam and Eve as the first humans to know and worship Him, the One True God. Adam and Eve gave birth to a lineage whose descendants brought salvation to the whole human race. Genesis Chapter 5 recounts the lineage from Adam and Eve to Noah. Genesis Chapters 10-11 recount the lineage from Noah to Abraham. Mathew Chapter 1 recounts the lineage from Abraham to Jesus.

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Out of jealousy, Cain killed Abel. As his punishment, God exiled Cain from the Garden of Eden, and Cain moved to the land of Nod. Then Cain's wife gave birth to a son, Enoch (Gen 4:1-17). Note that the Bible does not say that Cain married his sister, which would have had to be the case if Adam and Eve were the only two humans on the earth. Rather, Cain moved to the land of Nod and took a wife from there, so the Bible refers to other people on earth at the time of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve's third child was a son named Seth, and it was during his time that men first began to call themselves "the Lord's people" (Gen 4:25-26), and it was from Seth's line that Noah descended (Gen 5).

## History of the Catholic Church after Christ

(<http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/~yuri/ecc/>)

### The Apostolic Age ~ 33-100 AD

The first century was one of rapid growth, with the early church finding its identity.

The New Testament was written during this time.

- There is no historical document that Jesus Himself wrote. The writings that were to become the New Testament began to be written about 50 AD, about seventeen years after Christ's resurrection.
- The early books were written to explain and clarify the meaning of the crucifixion and to respond to tensions building between those adhering to Jewish Law and the gentiles who had been baptized in the name of Christ.
- Jesus was born into a time when the Jews were expecting their messiah to come to restore the Kingdom of Israel (on earth). His rejection by His People was written down to show the link with the prophecies of the Old Testament.
- The Bible is a witness to the faith of Jesus' followers, who were forced to demonstrate their willingness to die for that faith.

Jesus was a Jew, and He preached His message primarily to the Jews. But it was the gentiles, whose culture was more Roman influenced, who more fully accepted the teachings of Jesus. Thus, the Jerusalem Church had a very brief life as the center of worship.

Differences of opinion existed in the early church. As a result, the Council of Jerusalem was held circa 50 AD. Peter and Paul were key participants in the discussion, which was centered on Christians' need to adhere to Jewish Law and, in particular, circumcision.

### An Era of Trial and Opposition ~ 100-300 AD

The Roman Empire was a great asset to spreading the Christian message. The teachings of Jesus spread to the whole known world in a very short period of time.

- For the first time in the history of the world, a man could travel across most of Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor without crossing the hostile borders of rivaling nations. The Romans also built a system of roads that facilitated long-distance land travel for the first time.
- Persecution was common, as the Roman Empire demanded emperor worship, which was same as worshipping false gods. Also, the early Christian church preached pacifism and refused military duty. Rome tried to punish all those who refused to serve her. The resulting persecution served as a motivator to move to avoid death, thus spreading the faith.
- This was the age of the martyrs, when many Christians gave up their life rather than deny Jesus.

After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, which was prophesied by Jesus (Luke 19:41-44), the early church began to associate with Rome as the center of authority, the place where the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul were witnessed.

During this time, monasticism (monks and monasteries) began to flourish as centers for learning and spiritual support.

The church produced the canon of sacred writings, which has become the current New Testament.

Near end of this era, pressure began to ease on the issue of worshipping the emperor as a deity.

### **The Church in Radical Change ~300-500 AD**

By this time, Christians were in numbers large enough to impact the political balance in the empire. On Jan. 13, 313 Constantine legalized Christianity. Within seventy years the Christian faith was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The church changed its stance on war to the principles that "right had to be defended and wrong eliminated." This fully aligned with the empire's desire to survive. Coalition between the church and state involved the pope in politics and the emperor in religion.

The Roman Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, seeing that the church would soon break apart if agreements were not reached on some key issues. This is when we got the Nicene Creed that clarified certain parts of the Apostles' Creed that were being questioned. Many ecumenical councils convened throughout this time.

Christian ceremonies became much more elaborate and formalized.

### **A New Orientation for the Church ~ 500-1000 AD**

With the power shifts in the Roman Empire, so went the power in the Church. Constantinople became a city (and thus a church) of substantial strength and stature.

The force of Islam began to take much of the southern and eastern parts of the empire. The rift between the Byzantine (eastern) and the Roman (western) churches began to grow, even with this threat from Islam. The Byzantine Church eventually fell to the Islam forces.

Monasteries in the Roman Church continued to grow and had a significant influence on the education of "barbarians" enveloped by the empire. The Church became the center for learning, and thus:

- Christianity was able to persevere in an age of superstition and barbarism.
- The Church had a strong influence on the social and political environment.

### **The Great Schism ~ 1000-1300 AD**

As the power of the Church continued to grow, it began to be in conflict with the political power of the times. The political power of the pope reached its peak during this time. This time period was marked by papal greed and power struggle with the governments. This caused alternative models of the church (those of poverty, simplicity, chastity, humility, and obedience) to blossom, led by St. Francis of Assisi.

An internal power struggle occurred between the Eastern Orthodox Church (Byzantine, led by the Bishop of Constantinople) and the Western Roman Catholic Church (led by the Pope of Rome).

The continued influence between state and church further showed itself in the Crusades. The Crusades grew out of pressure from all sides by heretics. The idea was that “faith must be protected at all costs; heresy must be stopped.” The West, supported by the Roman Catholic Church, was the main force behind the Crusades. The Eastern Church was under attack from the forces of Islam. The Holy Land was threatened. The crusaders were coming to help.

The Great Schism was sealed when the western Crusaders plundered Constantinople in 1204, claiming the differences in the Eastern Church as heresy. By this time the Roman Church had lost control over these knights, who were killing and plundering.

All efforts to heal these wounds from the thirteenth century failed. The Eastern Orthodox Church claimed the Western Roman Catholic Church had departed from tradition and contaminated the religion with harmful innovations. The Roman Catholic Church accused the Eastern Orthodox Church of not accepting the leadership of the pope.

The Church was very institutional during this time, gaining great wealth and building many grand cathedrals. This brought forth many sects within the Church that preached poverty and simplicity.

### **The Church in Moral Crisis ~ 1300-1500 AD**

The continued excesses by the popes (preoccupation with Italian politics and the arts) made for a key factor in the time in history best known as the Protestant Reformation. Power struggles existed between cardinals over who should be the next pope. Reformation was the key element of the time. One of the best known reformists, Martin Luther, lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The result of the Protestant Reformation was that three main religious groups formed:

- The Roman Catholics Church, which based its faith on tradition, Holy Scripture, and the teachings of the ecumenical councils
- The Eastern Orthodox Church, which based its faith on tradition and Holy Scripture.
- The Protestant Churches, which use an interpretation of Holy Scripture as the full basis of their beliefs.

See the timeline of major Christian churches.

### **The Church in the Modern Era – 1500 AD to present**

The beginning of this time period is marked by the Church being asked to rule on the major advances in science. The majority of the scientists, like Galileo and Copernicus, were Christians. They saw no conflict between religion and uncovering the mysteries of the Creator, although this perspective was not shared by some in the Church.

During this time, the world was expanding rapidly, and the Church busied itself with spreading its message to the New World.

It is not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the separation between church and state had become complete. The governments in the New World were formed largely without any overt influence of a religious institution.

It is difficult to put the twentieth century into the context of the history of the church. We are in the middle of this history, and it is difficult to summarize.

## **Conclusion**

"[Peter,] you are 'Rock', and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

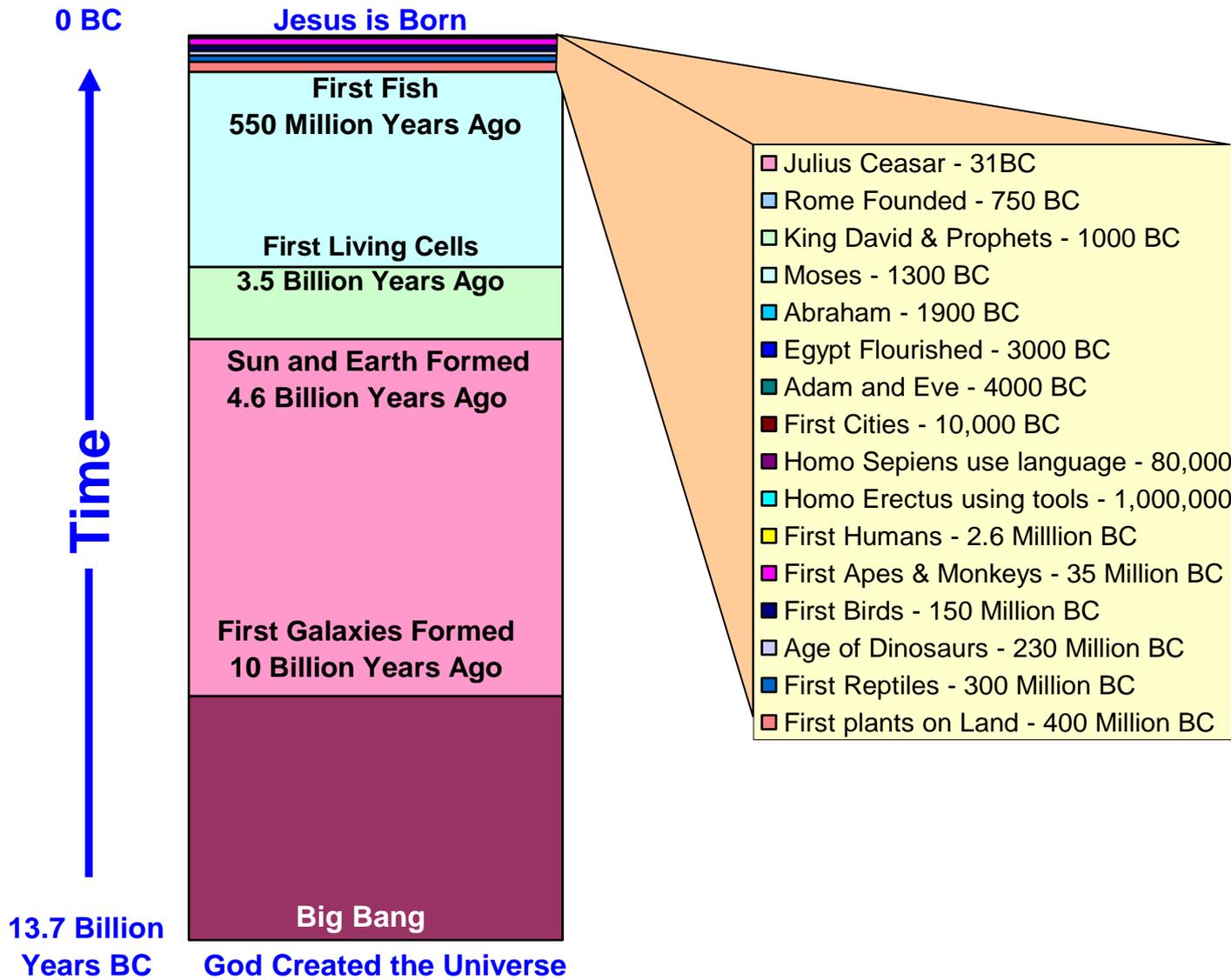
The Church is the sinless one made up of sinners. The Church derives its holiness from God, not from man (Catechism 867).

Even with the apparent shortcomings of some of its leaders, the Church has stood the test of time. No matter what man does, the Church that Christ founded Himself continues to flourish and do great things for humanity.

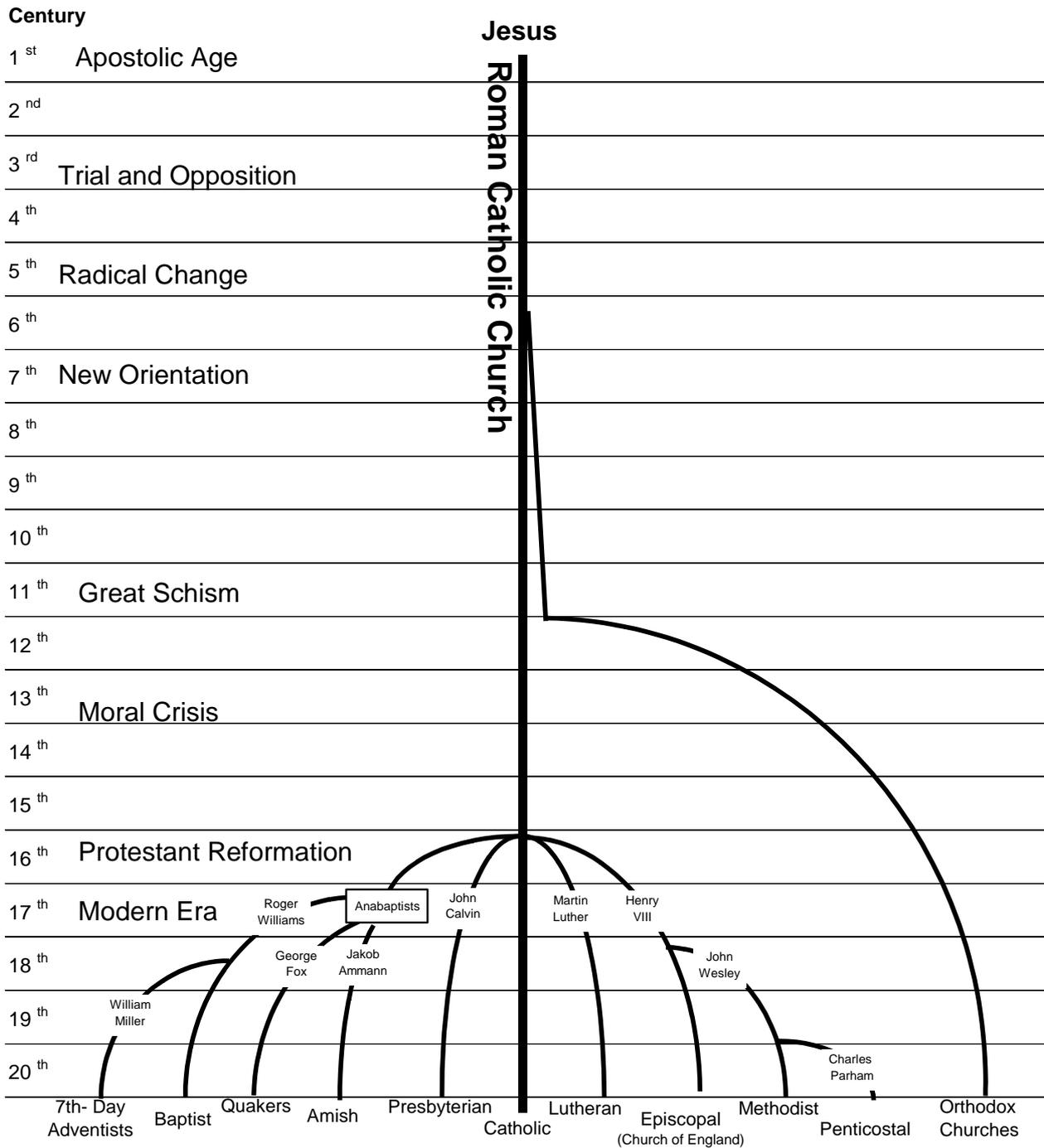
Christ never promised that all the Church leaders would be holy. But He did promise that the Church's teachings would always be holy, and that no one would be able to destroy the Church. Upon reflection, we can see that His promise has come true.

The mere fact that the Church has survived the corruption of some of its members proves that the Church's holiness comes from God and is not subject to its members. If the survival of the Church were left up to the works of man, it would have perished long ago, but since it comes from God, man cannot destroy it. In general, we find that institutions that depend on man to exist (governments, societies, etc.) have a relatively short life in a historical context.

# History of the Universe Before Christ



## Timeline since Jesus



The Roman Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Himself. Aside from the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, the other Christian churches were founded by men professing their individual ideology.

## **In Conclusion**

Write a letter to your bishop telling him why you want to be confirmed a Catholic.

You only get one chance at this life, so live life to the fullest. Through Jesus, the Catholic Church provides a means to do just that. Do not be deceived by the shallow temptations of this world that might imply otherwise.

**May Almighty God bless you, each and every day of your life, and may you have the time of your life.**