

# **The One Minute Catechism:**

**A Review of the Catechism of the Catholic Church**

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## **The One Minute Catechism: What is the Catechism?** (CCC 1-25)

This is a new series reviewing the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism contains an account of the essential elements of our Catholic faith. It is arranged around four topics: Our Creed, the liturgy and sacraments, morality, and prayer. The Catechism is based on the Sacred Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium (which is the Church's divinely given authority to teach the truths of religion). So why study it? The answer is simple: To seek to know and love God by better understanding and living our Catholic faith.

The current Catechism, published in 1992, was initiated by Pope St. John Paul the Second in order to update the language as well as certain elements of the Catechism as they evolved after the Second Vatican Council. Because the Catechism is at its core a teaching tool, the Church allows the Bishops to create different editions addressed to different cultures and different age groups. Many of us studied (or, perhaps more likely, memorized) the earlier Baltimore Catechism when we were young. The Baltimore Catechism, written in 1884, was an American adaptation of the Roman Catechism, which was written in 1566. On bookstore shelves today you will find the most current revised edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997) as well as the U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults (2019). The substantive content of these books is generally the same. The presentation and language of the U.S. version is simply adapted to a modern U.S. audience.

Unfortunately, after the Second Vatican Council, there has been less emphasis on teaching the faith through the Catechism. As a result, many Catholics today have not been taught the core elements of our faith. The length of the Catechism — it clocks in at 826 pages — and the occasional complexity of its ideas often intimidate many of us from studying it on our own. This new series is intended to remedy that and to introduce you to this great work so that we may all grow closer to God by knowing, living, and teaching our faith to our families and the world beyond. As the Catechism instructs, we undertake this venture in a spirit of love.

*Reflect: Do I know as much about my faith as I should? Do I know enough to teach others? Why not?*

*Pray: Lord, I seek wisdom. Teach me Your ways and guide me to do Your will. Help me to be persistent and strong in my beliefs so that I can give witness to the faith. May what I learn help to change lives, bring peace and understanding to the world, and bring glory to You, O Lord.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: Finding God through Creation and Reason** (CCC 26-49)

People have always asked fundamental questions: Who am I? Where am I going? Why is life so hard? Why is there sickness, death, and evil in the world? When asked with deeper reflection, these questions reveal an inner longing for God. The *Catechism* teaches that God has planted in every human heart the hunger and longing for Him.

By nature and vocation, then, we are religious beings. Every person naturally seeks to know the truth and to experience goodness. Moral goodness appeals to us. We treasure our freedom. We hear the voice of our conscience and want to follow it. We long for absolute happiness. These experiences make us aware of our souls and our spiritual nature. The more we become aware of these truths, the more we are drawn to the reality of God, the Supreme Good, and the more we desire communion with Him. We eventually understand that only in God will we find the truth, peace, and happiness for which we never stop searching.

Created in God's image, we are called to know and love God. The *Catechism* presents three paths through which we can come to know God: creation, our human reason, and Divine Revelation. Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have seen the created universe as evidence of God's existence. Through our human reason, we see that the order, harmony, purposefulness, and beauty of the world all point to an intelligent Creator. Using reason, we are able to speak about God even if our limited language cannot fully grasp the mystery of who He is. But, while we can come to know something about God by our natural power of reason, there is a deeper knowledge of God that comes to us only through Divine Revelation.

***Reflect: "Some people, to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?" — St. Augustine***

***Pray: O Lord, grant us the grace to respect and care for Your creation.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Finding God through Divine Revelation** (CCC 50-73)

Recall that God presents three paths through which we can come to know Him: creation, reason, and Divine Revelation. We know that we can come to know God using our reason to study creation. But Divine Revelation provides another order of knowledge, which we cannot possibly arrive at on our own. Revelation is God's self-disclosure of Himself and His loving plan to save us. Revelation shows us that God desires to have an intimate and loving relationship — a covenant — with humanity. Through Revelation, God has provided us with the definitive answers to the questions that we ask ourselves about the meaning and purpose of our lives.

As Catholics, we recognize that Revelation did not happen all at once. Instead, God gradually revealed Himself and His plan for us in stages over the course of time, beginning with our Old Testament forefathers, including Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. In each stage, God met humanity where it was. As St. Irenaeus suggested, this is much like parents who begin by teaching little children in simple terms and then gradually teach in a more sophisticated way as those children grow older. Ultimately, Revelation culminated in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man. Christ is God's one perfect, unsurpassable Word. As Catholics, we understand that in Christ, God said everything, and all previous Revelation can only be understood in the light of Christ. There will be no further Revelation until Christ returns at the end of time.

Although Revelation is complete, it has not been made completely explicit. It remains for the Christian faith to gradually grasp the full significance of Revelation over the course of the centuries.

***Reflect: We all want answers to life's questions. Can I give 10 minutes each day to read the Daily Readings so that I will hear God's answers to those questions?***

***Pray: Lord, as I ponder Your word in Holy Scripture, please help me to understand and faithfully apply Your Word in every single thing I do.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Transmission of the Faith** (CCC 74-100)

Revelation, God's self-disclosure of Himself and His loving plan to save us, culminated in Jesus Christ. Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel — the good news of His life, death, and resurrection — to the world. The revealed Word of God would be for everyone a source of saving truth and moral discipline. The Apostles fulfilled their mission by transmitting Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. They did so through their actions, preaching, and writing and through the authority they granted to their successors, the bishops of the Church.

Tradition is the living transmission of the Church's doctrine, life, and worship, aided by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is the speech of God as put down in writing by the biblical authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Tradition and Scripture are bound closely together. Both flow from God and come together to form one sacred deposit of faith moving toward the same goal. As Catholics, we accept and honor Tradition and Scripture equally.

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, in Scripture or Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. This office, known as the Magisterium, consists of the bishops and the Pope (the Bishop of Rome). The Magisterium is not superior to the Word, but rather is its servant, and it teaches only what has been handed down to it. The Magisterium exercises its authority to the fullest when it defines dogmas. Dogmas are statements of truths contained in or connected to Revelation that we as Catholics are obliged to follow. Dogmas should not be seen as negatives. Rather, think of them as "lights along the path of faith" that help us live more closely in harmony with God's will.

***Reflect: Would you be able to read and understand Bible on your own? Does the Church's authoritative interpretation help you better understand Scripture?***

***Pray: Lord Jesus, shelter our Holy Father the Pope and our Bishops under the protection of Your Sacred Heart. Be their light, their strength, and their consolation.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: How Catholics Read the Bible** (CCC 101-141)

The Church accepts and venerates the Bible as the Word of God as set down by authors who were divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Bible is composed of the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament (Note: Protestants do not accept all of these books so always look for the Catholic Bible online or in the bookstore). The Old and New Testaments are a unified whole with Jesus Christ at their center, and contain the truths necessary for our salvation. Together these books -- our canon -- make up Sacred Scripture. The Church set the canon during its first centuries and has repeatedly reaffirmed it.

In order to grasp the true meaning of Scripture, we must read it (1) with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture; (2) within the living Tradition of the whole Church; and (3) with attention to the harmony that exists among the truths of faith contained within Scripture. The Church recognizes two senses in which we read Scripture: the literal and the spiritual. The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words. It is important to remember that the Bible contains histories, hymns, wisdom sayings, poems, parables, and other forms of figurative language. One cannot grasp the meaning of the words without understanding the literary form used and the context within which the words were written. In understanding the literal meaning, we are aided by the critical interpretations of Catholic Scripture scholars. We must also read the Bible in its spiritual sense, which means understanding its allegorical or symbolic message, its moral lessons, and the way it relates to or leads us toward heaven. Fortunately, we Catholics have the Magisterium (the Bishops and the Pope) to provide us with an authoritative interpretation of Scripture.

***Reflect: What is your favorite part of the Bible? Why does that part speak to you?***

***Pray: God the Father, You will all men and women to be saved and come to the knowledge of Your truth. Send workers into Your great harvest that the Gospel may be preached to every creature and Your people, gathered together by the Word of Life and strengthened by the power of the Sacraments, may advance in the way of salvation and love.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: What is Faith?**

(CCC 141-197)

God makes Himself known to us through creation, reason, and Divine Revelation. This gift from God and our response to it are called faith. By faith, we are able to give our minds and hearts to God, to trust in His will, and to follow the direction He gives us. Faith is a grace that brings us into a personal, loving union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and enables us both to hear the Word of God and to keep it.

The *Catechism* explores the complexity of faith in a number of ways. We believe faith is both a personal and communal relationship, which occurs in the life and worship of the Church. Because God created everything, we believe faith is completely compatible with human reason; both faith and reason work together to discover truth. We believe that faith is necessary for salvation. We believe faith is a gift of grace. We believe faith is a free, human act and that God never forces His truth and love upon us. Finally, we believe that faith must include a strong belief in all that is contained in Scripture and Tradition, including the Church's liturgical prayers and the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which summarize and symbolize our faith.

Our faith is a life long journey toward eternal union with God in heaven. There will be periods of temptation, worry, shadows, darkness, and, yes, even doubt. Many saints experienced such tests. Thankfully, Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide us on the way. It takes time and maturity to explore the meaning of God's Revelation and to gain some hint of the awe and majesty to which divine truths point. But despite these challenges and the doubters in the modern world, we believers know the strength, wisdom, confidence, and hope that a life of faith brings.

***Reflect: What can I do help bring members of my family back to faith in God?***

***Pray: Act of Faith. O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Believing in God** (CCC 198-231)

Both the Apostles' and Niceno-Constantinopolitan (more commonly called the "Nicene") creeds begin with our profession of our belief in God. We believe there is only one, true God who is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, and beyond anything we can understand or express. He is the Creator who transcends the world and history. Faced with God's mysterious presence, we discover how small we really are. Our faith in God leads us to turn to Him alone as our origin and our ultimate goal. We prefer nothing to Him and substitute nothing for Him.

In all His works, God displays His kindness, goodness, grace, steadfast love, trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness, and truth. He is the Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why we must abandon ourselves to trust in the truth of His words in all things. God is love itself. He loves us with sheer gratuitous and everlasting love that is stronger than a mother's love for her child or a bridegroom's love for his beloved wife. He is the highest of holiness, rich in mercy, and always ready to forgive. He never stops saving us.

Believing in God and loving Him with all our being has enormous consequences. It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty, which motivates us to serve Him. It means living in thanksgiving and gratitude because we realize that everything we are comes from Him. It means appreciating the unity and dignity of all people. It means making good use of created things, using them only in so far as they bring us closer to God and detaching ourselves from things to the extent they lead us away from Him. Finally, it means trusting in God always, especially in times of adversity. In the wonderful words of St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila):

Let nothing trouble you/ Let nothing frighten you/ Everything passes/ God never changes  
Patience/ Obtains all/ Whoever has God/ Wants for nothing/ God alone is enough.

***Reflect: How does the way I live my life show others that I believe in God?***

***Pray: Act of Love. O Lord God, I love you above all things and I love my neighbor for your sake because you are the highest, infinite and perfect good, worthy of all my love. In this love I intend to live and die. Amen.***



## **One Minute Catechism: The Holy Trinity** (CCC 231-267)

The Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the essential, fundamental, and central mystery of our faith. At the same time, it is a mystery that is inaccessible to human reason alone.

In the Catechism, the doctrine of the Trinity includes three truths of faith. First, the Holy Trinity is One. We do not speak of three “gods.” We confess one God in three distinct Persons, who are “consubstantial,” meaning of the same substance, essence, or nature. But the Divine Persons do not share the one divinity among themselves. Each Person is fully God, whole and entire. They are a unity of Persons in one divine nature.

Second, the Divine Persons really are distinct from each other. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not simply names for different modes or appearances of God. Each Person is fully God in a way distinct from the others.

Third, the Divine Persons are in relation to each other. The distinct identity of each is understood only in reference to the others. The Father cannot be Father without the Son, nor can the Son be the Son without the Father. The Holy Spirit is related to the Father and the Son, who both send Him forth.

This is difficult stuff. The Trinity reminds us that God is truly infinite and transcendent, exceeding our human language and understanding. God cannot be reduced and solved as if He were a math problem or scientific formula. The work and nature of God will always be a mystery. As St. Augustine reminds us, “what you understand, cannot possibly be God.” Each time we bless ourselves and proclaim our allegiance to the Trinity, we can simply humble our hearts and minds and be thankful for the love, power, and mystery of God.

***Reflect: St. Patrick used the clover to explain the concept of the Trinity to the Irish. Is that a good way to understand the Trinity or does it simplify things too much?***

***Pray: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Creation** (CCC 268-301)

We believe God is almighty. He created everything, rules everything, and can do everything. God created the universe as a sheer act of love to show forth and communicate His glory, goodness, beauty, and truth. The Catechism's teachings on creation are of major importance. Where do we come from? Where are we going? These questions about our origin and our end are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and our actions.

The Bible and the Catechism help us to answer these questions. It is important to remember, however, that the Church does not read the Biblical creation story as a literal, scientific textbook about creation. Rather, the Catechism understands the Bible as communicating greater spiritual truths about God's work of creation using different literary forms, including the wonderful words of Genesis. Ultimately, in seeking to understand creation, we see no conflict between our faith and our reason.

So what are these spiritual truths about creation? First, God created the world out of His love and wisdom. Creation is emphatically not the result of blind fate or complete chance. Second, God made the universe "out of nothing." This means that the world is not a "part" of God, nor was it made from some pre-existing substance. Rather, the world depends completely upon God for its existence. While God is independent of His creation and distinct from it, He sustains creation in existence by His loving power and protection. Third, creation reflects God's goodness and wisdom. Because the universe is destined for the human family, whom God calls to a personal relationship with Himself, He ordered the universe in a way that allows us to use our reason to perceive His hand working in and through it. The Church teaches that "God who creates and conserves all things by His Word," provides us "with constant evidence of Himself in created realities."

***Reflect: Darwin's theory of evolution and the Big Bang theory do not "disprove" religion. Indeed, a Catholic priest and scientist named Georges Lemaître was the first person to suggest that Big Bang theory. Catholic belief and modern scientific reasoning are completely compatible.***

***Pray: Prayer to Saint Albert the Great. O Divine Creator, Saint Albert was a bishop who introduced Greek and Arabic science to medieval Europe, raising understanding of botany, biology, physics, and other studies of nature. A scientist himself, he wrote many books on these subjects. I ask him to pray for all scientists today, for their talents to be used to promote life rather than to destroy it, for elusive cures to be found, and for the moral use of the discoveries that they have already made. O Lord, fill them with Your Holy Spirit to guide them into understanding and respecting that You are the Author and Master of all creation. Saint Albert, pray for us. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil** (CCC 302-324)

In His infinite wisdom and goodness, God freely willed to create a world that was not perfect, but is in a state of journeying towards its ultimate perfection. The way in which God protects, governs, cares for, and guides His creation toward this perfection is called “divine providence.”

God is the sovereign master of His plan. To carry it out He makes use of our cooperation. God grants us both our existence and our free will. Though often unconscious collaborators with God’s will, we can also deliberately cooperate with the divine plan by our actions, prayers, and sufferings.

So if God cares for all His creatures, why does evil exist? There is no quick answer. Studying the entire Christian message helps lead us to a greater understanding of the answer. We see that during creation’s journey toward its ultimate end of perfection, constructive and destructive forces of nature appear and disappear. We see the more perfect alongside the less perfect. Physical good exists with physical evil so long as creation has not reached perfection.

We, as intelligent and free creatures, also have to freely choose to journey toward our ultimate destinies. We can go astray. Then, moral evil enters the world. God is not directly or indirectly the cause of this moral evil. He permits it, however, because He respects our freedom and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it. Indeed, from the greatest moral evil ever committed — the rejection and brutal murder of Jesus — God brought about the Resurrection and our redemption.

We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. The ways of His providence, however, are often unknowable to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases and we see God face to face, will we fully know the ways by which He has guided His creation to that definitive perfect end for which He created it.

***Reflect: How can we encourage people to use their freedom for God’s greater glory rather than for their own selfish satisfaction?***

***Pray: Father, hear our prayers for the salvation of the world. Grant Mercy to all souls that turned away from you. Open their hearts and minds with Your light.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Heaven and Earth** (CCC 325-354)

In our Creeds we profess that God is “creator of heaven and earth” (Apostles’ Creed) and of “all that is, visible and invisible” (Nicene Creed). In other words, God created everything — spiritual and physical.

As to the spiritual and invisible, we believe in angels. Angels are spiritual, non-corporeal beings with intelligence and will that are servants and messengers of God. They are personal and immortal, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures. They are active and present throughout Scripture, proclaiming the Good News of Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection. They will herald Christ’s return at the end of time. Until then, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels. Each of us has a Guardian Angel that protects and shepherds us throughout our lives.

As to the visible world, we believe that God willed into being everything in the visible world in all its richness, diversity, and order. Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection, with its own stability, order, truth, and excellence, all reflecting God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. We must, therefore, respect the particular goodness of every creature and avoid any disordered use of things, which would be in contempt of God and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

God wills the interdependence of creatures. The spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. We see this everywhere we look: between a bee and a flower; among humans living in modern societies. While there is a solidarity among all creatures, humans are the summit of God’s creation.

The beauty of the universe, its order and harmony, reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of our intellects and wills. In creation, God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God’s covenant. We must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws that God has written into it.

***Reflect: Do I take time to appreciate the beauty of creation -- from the clouds and sun, to the trees and the flowers, to my family and neighbors?***

***Pray: 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. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism 12 – Man and Woman** (CCC 355-384)

God created humans in His image. Humans are qualitatively different from and superior to all other creatures. We alone are created to know, love, and serve God. We have a source of inner spiritual energy that draws our minds and hearts toward truth and love, and to God Himself, the source of all truth and love. We are also capable of self-knowledge and of entering into communion with other humans through self-giving. These qualities unite us as God's stewards in the care of the earth and of all God's other creatures.

God made humans to be a unity of body and soul. The human soul is the source of physical life for our bodies and is the core of our spiritual powers of knowing and loving. While our bodies come into being through biological processes, our souls are created directly by God at the moment of conception. Our souls are immortal. Our soul continues in existence after it separates from our body at death, and it will be reunited with our body at the final Resurrection.

God created man and woman. He willed them into being in perfect equality as human persons, but also as distinctly man and woman. Each is meant to complement the other in a communion of persons, which is seen most evidently in marriage. In marriage, God unites man and woman so they can transmit human life. As spouses and parents, man and woman cooperate in a unique way in God's work.

Finally, we need to recognize that God created the first humans in a state of original holiness and justice, so that they were able to live in harmony with His plan. In that state, they did not suffer. There was no death. But our first parents also had the gift of free will and thus could be tempted by created things to turn away from God. And temptation tragically led to their Fall, which we will take up next time.

***Reflect: Do I accept the Church's teachings on the sanctity of all human life from conception until natural death? Or am I willing to compromise my beliefs from time to time based upon other political commitments?***

***Pray: Heavenly Father, in Your love for us, protect against the wickedness of the devil, those helpless little ones to whom You have given the gift of life. Touch with pity the hearts of those women pregnant in our world today who are not thinking of motherhood. Help them to see that the child they carry is made in Your image - as well as theirs - made for eternal life. Dispel their fear and selfishness and give them true womanly hearts to love their babies and give them birth and all the needed care that a mother can give. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.***

### 13. Original Sin (CCC 385-421)

In Genesis, we read of Adam and Eve disobeying God and being sent out of the Garden of Eden. We call this fall — this loss of original holiness and righteousness and its results — “Original Sin.” While Scripture uses figurative language in describing the Fall, it affirms an actual event that took place at the beginning of human history.

At the beginning, God gave humans the gift of freedom. This gift was meant to draw them closer to God and to each other. God asked them — as He asks us — to recognize their limits and to trust in Him. But through temptation by the Devil, they tried to surpass their human limitations. The Devil is a reality. He is a fallen angel who radically rejected God and still seeks to seduce humans to join his revolt. Adam and Eve, did what the Devil tempted them to do. They abused their freedom, failed to trust God, and disobeyed His command. They thus lost paradise and its gifts, and sin entered the world. Because of the unity of the human race, their sin shattered God’s created harmony, not only for them but also for us.

We are all born with Original Sin. But we do not “commit” Original Sin in the same way we commit other sins. It is not a personal fault; it is an inherited condition of all humans. Original Sin underlies all other sins. It wounds our natural powers of knowing and loving. We are subject to ignorance, which makes it hard to know and accept truth. Some even doubt truth exists. We endure suffering and death. We want things that are bad for us and we have an inclination to sin. This inclination is called “concupiscence.” Because sin alienates us from each other, it weakens our ability to love one another as Jesus commands us. Mercifully, Jesus frees us from Original Sin and our own actual sins. By baptism, we share in the redemptive act of Jesus’ death and Resurrection, are freed from Original Sin, and are strengthened against the power of sin and death. We are reconciled to God and join His Church. Though Original Sin has had far-reaching consequences, of far greater consequence is God’s mercy.

***Reflect: Bishop Robert Barron has compared the stain of Original Sin to the weakness suffered by a baby born of a drug addict mother. The baby’s condition is not his fault, but nonetheless he suffers the consequences of his mother’s actions.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Jesus Christ, Son of God and Lord** (CCC 422-455)

In the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, we Catholics profess our belief in Jesus "Christ" as God's "only Son" and "our Lord." Each of these titles has a deep meaning.

In Hebrew, "Jesus" means "God saves." The name Jesus signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of His Son, who was made man to save us all from our sins.

The word "Christ" is from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah," which means "anointed." God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with divine power. Jesus is the one whose coming God promised to the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

The title "Son of God" signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God His Father. Jesus is the only Son of the Father and God Himself. The acceptance that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is God Himself is the very heart of Christian belief.

Finally, the title "Lord" comes from the word "Kryrios," which is the Greek translation of the inexpressible Hebrew name "YHWH" (pronounced "Yah-weh"). YHWH is, of course, the name God Himself revealed to Moses. However, as a sign of extreme respect, devout Jews would not use this name. Instead, throughout the Old Testament, God the Father is called "Lord." By calling Jesus "Lord," we are recognizing Him as God. Moreover, by recognizing Jesus Christ's lordship over the world and human history, we are accepting that we should never submit ourselves in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

To invite others to our Christian faith, we must first proclaim the truth that Jesus is Christ, Son of God, and Lord. We must seek to understand the deepest meaning of Christ's actions and words and strive to live in imitation of Him. From this loving knowledge of Christ, will spring the desire to proclaim Him — to evangelize — and to lead others to the "yes" of faith in Jesus Christ.

***Reflect: Would I have the courage to tell a friend at work that I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Lord and Savior? Would that friend be surprised to learn that I believed this?***

***Pray: O Christ Jesus, when all is darkness and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of Your presence, Your love, and Your strength. Help us to have perfect trust in Your protecting love and strengthening power, so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You, we shall see Your hand, Your purpose, Your will through all things. — St. Ignatius of Loyola***

## **The One Minute Catechism: True God and True Man** (CCC 456-483)

We confess in the Nicene Creed, that “[f]or us men and for our salvation” Jesus, the Son of God, “came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” God became man in order to reconcile us sinful humans with Him, to show us His infinite love, to be our model of holiness, and to make us participants in His divine nature.

The Church calls the wonderful mystery of the union of Jesus’ divine and human natures in the one divine Person the “Incarnation.” Faith in the Incarnation is the foundation of our Christian faith. The Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man. Nor does it imply that He is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. Rather, Jesus became truly man while remaining truly God. He became our brother, without ceasing to be God, our Lord.

Jesus was perfect in His humanity, composed of rational soul and body. He was like us in all things but sin. Jesus assumed a true human body, animated by a rational human soul. He had a human intellect, but also had an intimate and immediate knowledge of God His Father and knew fully the eternal plans that He had come to reveal.

Jesus had a divine will and a human will. Jesus humanly willed all that He had already divinely decided with the Father and the Holy Spirit regarding our salvation. Jesus’ human will followed the divine will without opposition or reluctance.

Jesus knew us and loved us with a human heart. His heart, pierced for our salvation, is rightly the symbol of His infinite love for the Father and each one of us.

***Reflect: As Catholics, we are called to live in imitation of Christ. What one thing could you change about yourself to become more Christ like? Now will you do it?***

***Pray: The Fatima Prayer. O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy.***



## **The One Minute Catechism: Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary** (CCC 484-511)

In the Annunciation, God invites Mary to carry and give birth to His Son. God does not force Mary -- or any one of us -- to accept His call. Instead, the plan for salvation fully embraces Mary's -- and our -- human freedom. Note the parallel to the Genesis story. Eve's free act of defiance helped bring death into the world; Mary's free assent to carry the Son of God contributed to the life and salvation of the world. Because Mary responded with the obedience of faith and said "yes" to God, by the divine power of the Holy Spirit, she conceived Jesus in her womb. Mary truly became the Mother of God. Jesus is at once fully God and fully man. His humanity comes from Mary alone. It is in His humanity drawn from Mary that Jesus will suffer crucifixion and rise from the dead.

As Catholics, we believe that Mary was, from the moment of her conception, preserved immune from the stain of original sin. Mary's Immaculate Conception indicates that God predestined her to be the mother of Jesus. This is why the Angel Gabriel greets her as "full of grace." It is this special gift of grace that allowed Mary to so readily assent to God's request and to remain free of every personal sin throughout her life.

We believe that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also believe in Mary's real and perpetual virginity even after she gave birth to Jesus. Her virginity is a sign of her absolute faith and her undivided gift of herself to God's will.

Mary's free obedience at the Annunciation is the perfect example of true faith and trust in God. We should always strive to imitate Mary's wholehearted offering of herself to do God's will.

***Reflect: How am I doing obeying God?***

***Pray: Prayer to the Immaculate Conception. Mary our Mother, today the People of God celebrate you and venerate you as Immaculate, preserved forever from the stain of sin. Knowing that you, who are our Mother, are totally free from sin, is of great comfort to us. Knowing that evil has no power over you, fills us with hope and strength in the daily struggle we have to face against the threats of the evil one. But we are not alone in this struggle, we are not orphans because Jesus, before dying on the Cross, gave you to us as our Mother. Even though we are sinners, we are still your children, children of the Immaculate, called to that holiness that shines in you by the grace of God since the beginning. Inspired by this hope, today we invoke your maternal protection for us, our families, this city and the whole world. Through your intercession, may the power of God's love that preserved you from original sin, free humanity from every form of spiritual and material slavery and make God's plan of salvation be victorious in both hearts and in history. May grace prevail over pride in us too, your children. May we become merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. During this time leading to the celebration of Jesus' birth, teach us to go against the flow: to strip ourselves, to be humble and giving, to listen and be silent, to go out of ourselves, giving space to the beauty of God, source of true joy. Pray for us, our Immaculate Mother!***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Life of Jesus Christ (Part I)** (CCC 512-530)

In the Creed we profess Jesus Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension. We focus on the great truths that Jesus was sent by, and returns to, God the Father. These two truths provide all of the light we need to understand everything else in the Gospels about Jesus' earthly life.

Jesus' life reveals two great mysteries. First, through His words and actions, we come to know that He is the Son of God. Second, even though salvation comes completely from His death on the cross and Resurrection, everything that Jesus did, said, and suffered was aimed at our salvation as fallen human beings and the restoration of our calling to be God's children.

In the Old Testament, we see that God prepared the world for the coming of His Son over the centuries, culminating with arrival of John the Baptist, who was the last and greatest of the prophets. Each Advent, we relive this long period of waiting for the coming of our savior.

In the Gospels, we learn much about Jesus' birth and infancy. At Christmas, the glory of heaven shows forth in the weakness of a baby. Jesus' circumcision is a sign of His belonging to the Hebrew people and anticipates our own baptisms. The Epiphany shows to all nations that Jesus is the Messiah King of Israel. Jesus' presentation in the Temple shows, through the words of Simeon and Anna, Israel's anticipation of its encounter with its Savior. The flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents by King Herod show that the entire life of Jesus will be under the sign of persecution. And the Holy Family's departure from Egypt and return to Nazareth recalls the Exodus and presents Jesus as the new Moses -- the true and final liberator of the world from the darkness of sin.

***Reflect: What does Jesus' infancy teach us about the role of parents?***

***Pray: O glorious St. Joseph, to you God committed the care of His only begotten Son amid the many dangers of this world. We come to you and ask you to take under your special protection the children God has given us. Through holy baptism, they became children of God and members of His holy Church. We consecrate them to you today, that through this consecration they may become your foster children. Guard them, guide their steps in life, form their hearts after the hearts of Jesus and Mary. St. Joseph, who felt the tribulation and worry of a parent when the child Jesus was lost, protect our dear children for time and eternity. May you be their father and counsellor. Let them, like Jesus, grow in age as well as in wisdom and grace before God and men. Preserve them from the corruption of this world, and give us the grace one day to be united with them in Heaven forever. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Life of Jesus Christ (Part II)** (CCC 531-540)

The Gospels focus on the last three years of Jesus' life on earth. But what about all of the time between His birth and His public ministry? The Church speaks of this time as the "hidden life" of Jesus. During this time, Jesus silently lived an ordinary existence. Reflecting on this reality invites us to enter into closer fellowship with Him. We can appreciate the holiness that can be found in a daily life of prayer, simplicity, work, and family love. Moreover, we can see that Jesus' obedience to Mary and Joseph during this time exemplifies His faithful obedience to His Father. And, in the story of the finding of Jesus in the Temple, we see that Mary and Joseph faithfully accepted the mystery of Jesus even though they did not always understand it.

To inaugurate His public life and to anticipate the "Baptism" of His death, Jesus was baptized by John. Jesus who was without sin and who would take away the sins of the world chose to be numbered among all of us sinners. After He was baptized, the Holy Spirit appears as a dove and God speaks from heaven proclaiming Jesus as His beloved Son. Jesus' Baptism thus represents His total acceptance of His mission and shows Him to be the Messiah and Son of God. Jesus' Baptism also anticipates our own baptisms.

After His Baptism, Jesus goes into the desert for 40 days. In the desert, Satan tempts Jesus three times, encouraging Him to forsake His obedience to the mission given to Him by God the Father. These temptations repeat the temptation of Adam in the Garden and the temptations of the Israelites during their long journey in the desert. But Jesus — the "new Adam" so unlike the original Adam — resists each temptation. Jesus' total victory over the devil anticipates His total victory in the Passion and Resurrection. The Church unites herself to the mystery of these 40 days in a special way each year during Lent.

***Reflect: How am I doing resisting the temptation to sin? Do I rationalize and justify my sins? Do I think the concept of sin is a relic of the old Catholic Church?***

***Pray: When you are tempted to sin, pray a Hail Mary or the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Life of Jesus Christ (Part III)** (CCC 541-570)

In Galilee, Jesus proclaimed the arrival of the Kingdom of God and called on humanity to repent and believe in the Gospel. Jesus invited everyone – even the worst of sinners – to accept the boundless mercy of God the Father. To enter the Kingdom, one must first accept Jesus' Word with a humble heart. In other words, we do not pick and choose just the parts of the Gospel that we like. We totally submit our hearts, minds, and souls to God. We continually strive to love God and one another.

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus performed powerful signs and miracles, which help us see that He was sent by God and that the Kingdom is present in Him. Although He healed some people, Jesus did not come to abolish all evils here on Earth. Instead, He came to free us from the slavery of sin, which stops all of us from following our vocations as children of God.

Jesus chose twelve Apostles to be with Him and participate in His mission. He gave the Apostles a share of His authority to teach, to absolve from sins, and to build up and govern the Church. Jesus chose Peter to receive the keys of the Kingdom and made him the leader of the Church with the responsibility to maintain the integrity of the faith and strengthen his brothers.

Jesus' Transfiguration, as St. Thomas Aquinas explained, shows us the Trinity: "the Father in the voice, the Son in the man Jesus, the Spirit in the shining cloud." The Transfiguration also reveals the glorious bodily transformation that will occur after the Resurrection.

As His public ministry was culminating, Jesus chose to go up to Jerusalem to suffer his Passion, death, and Resurrection. As the Messiah who shows us the coming of the Kingdom, He entered into the holy city mounted on a donkey. We celebrate this entry each year on Palm Sunday, which opens Holy Week.

***Reflect: Read Matthew Chapters 5 through 7.***

***Pray: Prayer to St. Peter. O Holy Apostle, you are the Rock upon which Almighty God has built His Church. Obtain for me I pray you: lively faith, firm hope, and burning love, complete detachment from myself, contempt of the world, patience in adversity, humility in prosperity, recollection in prayer, purity of heart, a right intention in all my works, diligence in fulfilling the duties of my state of life, constancy in my resolutions, resignation to the will of God and perseverance in the grace of God even unto death; that so, by means of your intercession and your glorious merits, I may be made worthy to appear before the Chief and Eternal Shepherd of Souls, Jesus Christ, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ (Part I)** (CCC 571-594)

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus suffered His passion and death on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. This Easter mystery fulfills God's plan to save us from our sins and stands at the very center of our Catholic faith. Over the next few installments, we will examine each part of this central mystery.

So why did certain Jewish religious leaders want Jesus put to death? These leaders accused Jesus of acting against the Jewish law, the Temple in Jerusalem, and against faith in one God because He said that He was the Son of God. For these reasons, these leaders had Jesus arrested, tried before their religious court (the Sanhedrin), and then handed Him over to the Roman governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, to be put to death. [At the time, only the ruling Romans could execute people in Jerusalem.]

Despite the allegations of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus did not seek to abolish the law God gave to Moses. Rather, Jesus fulfilled the law by giving the law its definitive interpretation. Jesus was also not hostile to the Temple. On the contrary, He recognized it as His Father's house and chose to do an important part of His teaching there. But Jesus also foretold of the Temple's destruction in connection with His own approaching death and presented Himself as the definitive dwelling place of God among men. Finally, Jesus never contradicted the Jewish faith in one God, not even when He performed miracles in fulfillment of the prophets and revealed Himself to be God by pardoning sins. When Jesus called on everyone to believe in Him and to be converted, some Jewish leaders tragically misunderstood His message and decided that Jesus should be put to death for blasphemy.

***Reflect: Read Deuteronomy 30:1-14.***

***Pray: How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh! Blessed are those who observe His instructions, who seek Him with all their hearts, and, doing no evil, who walk in His ways. You lay down Your precepts to be carefully kept. May my ways be steady in doing Your will. Then I shall not be shamed, if my gaze is fixed on Your commandments. I thank You with a sincere heart for teaching me Your upright judgements. I shall do Your will; do not ever abandon me wholly. Psalm 119:1-8.***

## The One Minute Catechism: The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ (Part II) (CCC 595-630)

Contemplating Jesus's passion and death leads us to many profound questions.

Who is responsible for Jesus' passion and death? As Catholics, our answer simple: All of us. The Catechism teaches that every single sinner — that is, every human being (except Jesus and Mary) — is the cause of Jesus' suffering and death. We are especially guilty when we neglect or reject our faith and choose to sin and delight in our vices. It is important to remember that we do not blame all of the Jewish people who were living at the time of the crucifixion nor do we blame their descendants today. Simply put, we blame ourselves.

Was Jesus' death on the cross part of God's plan? Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance nor the result of an unfortunate set of circumstances. Rather, His death was always a part of the mystery of God's plan to save humanity from its sinfulness. As a sheer act of love, God sent His Son to sacrifice Himself in order to make amends for our sins. Jesus' entire life, in turn, was a free offering in which He carried out God's plan for our salvation. As is written in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus gave "His life as a ransom for many."

Did Jesus fear death? Because Jesus was fully human (and fully God), He felt the full horror of death. Despite His fear, Jesus' human will remained faithful and obedient to the will of God to achieve our salvation. Jesus freely offered His life as a sacrifice to pay the debt incurred by humanity's sinfulness. Through this act of love, Jesus reconciled all humanity with God. The Paschal sacrifice of Jesus Christ, therefore, redeems humanity in a way that is unique, perfect, and definitive. It opens up communion with God for us all.

Did Jesus really die? Jesus experienced a real death and a true burial. But the power of God preserved His body from corruption during the three days in the tomb.

***Reflect: Look at Jesus crucified. Look at His terrible wounds. Imagine the pain. Imagine the utter injustice. Your sins and my sins helped inflict those wounds. Each time we choose to sin, we inflict a new wound.***

***Pray: Prayer to Jesus Crucified. Here I am, good and gentle Jesus, kneeling before you. With great fervor, I pray and ask you to instill in me genuine convictions of faith, hope, and love, with true sorrow for my sins and a firm resolve to amend them.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ (Part III)** (CCC 631-658)

We say in the Apostles' Creed that after Jesus died, He "descended into hell." Jesus did not go to the hell of the damned. Rather, this "hell" was the state of all those people, righteous and evil, who had died before Jesus' death on the cross. In this state, the just awaited their redeemer so they could enter into the vision of God in heaven. In other words, before Jesus' saving death, people did not go to heaven. But once Jesus conquered death and the devil, He opened the gates of heaven for the just to enter.

The Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday is the crowning truth of our faith in Jesus Christ and represents, along with His cross, an essential part of the Paschal Mystery. Jesus' Resurrection is both a historical fact and a transcendent reality — that is, something beyond human understanding. The historical facts of Jesus' Resurrection include the empty tomb and His multiple appearances to Peter and the Apostles as well as many others. These eyewitness accounts are recorded in the New Testament. The Resurrection is also, of course, a mystery of faith that ultimately exceeds our understanding and transcends history.

As the Gospels record, Jesus' risen body clearly bore the marks of His suffering and crucifixion. At the same time, His body was also in a glorified form that was beyond the rules of time and space. Because of this, the risen Jesus was completely free to appear to His disciples how and where He wished.

The Resurrection is the climax of the Incarnation. It confirms the divinity of Jesus Christ and all of the things that He did and taught. It fulfills all of the divine promises made to humans throughout time. By His death, Jesus liberates us from sin. By His Resurrection, He opens for us the way to a new life, restored in grace by God and living as Jesus' brothers and sisters.

***Reflect: Imagine you are a disciple who watched Jesus Christ be brutally tortured and murdered on Good Friday. Really put yourself into the fear, anguish, confusion, and complete despondency you would have felt. Now imagine you find the tomb empty on Easter morning and you met Christ resurrected. What do you feel now?***

***Pray: Heavenly Father and God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for He is alive and has become the Lord of Life. From the waters of death, You raise us with Him and renew Your gift of life within us. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with You. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: Jesus Ascended into Heaven and Will Return to Judge the Living and the Dead**

(CCC 659-682)

After forty days during which He repeatedly showed Himself to the Apostles, Jesus ascended into heaven. In His humanity and divinity, Jesus sits at the right hand of God and reigns in everlasting glory. He constantly intercedes for us through the Holy Spirit and gives us the hope of one day reaching the place He has prepared for us in heaven. At the same time, Jesus mysteriously also remains here on earth where His kingdom is already present like a seed in the Catholic Church.

One day, Jesus will return in glory, but we do not know when. We must always live in watchful anticipation, praying for Jesus' return. Before His return, there will be an apocalyptic upheaval. The Church will suffer a great trial. Many people, whether appearing to be religious or openly rejecting God, will falsely promise to bring heaven to earth through human effort. We must be wary and reject these evil, false promises. After this period of trial, Jesus will return and conquer the evil that has taken hold in the world. The Last Judgment will occur and the Kingdom of God will be fully realized.

So what will happen in the Last Judgment? As we pray in the Creeds, Jesus will “judge the living and the dead.” He will judge the secrets of our hearts as well as our conduct toward God and neighbor, which truly show our acceptance or rejection of God's grace and divine love. Based upon how we have lived, we will either be filled with life and join God in Heaven or be condemned.

Contemplating these ideas can be troubling. Do not be afraid. We are called to embrace our entire Catholic faith and to strive to live in imitation of Jesus Christ in every aspect of our lives, every minute of every day by loving God and neighbor. This is a demanding standard, which we cannot meet through our own exertions or will. Fortunately, we have the love, mercy, and grace of God — in particular, the grace we receive through the sacraments — to help us on our journey to the end.

***Reflect: At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, right before He ascends into heaven, Jesus tells the Apostles: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” It is good to remember this at least once every day.***

***Pray: Anima Christi. Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within Your wounds, hide me. Never permit me to be separated from You. From the wicked enemy, defend me. At the hour of my death call me, and bid me to come to Your side, that with Your Angels and Your Saints, I may praise You for all eternity, Amen.***



## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Spirit - Part I** (CCC 687-747)

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is equal in being with the Father and the Son and of the same divine nature and substance as the Father and the Son – “consubstantial” with them, as we say in the Nicene Creed. Simply put, the Holy Spirit is God.

Just before His Ascension, Jesus promised the Apostles and each one of us that we would receive the Holy Spirit, which would enable us to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit fills us with grace that allows us to grasp the meaning and depth of Divine Revelation contained in Scripture. He helps us understand the Church’s teachings and gives us the wisdom to see how these teachings apply to every aspect of our lives. Finally, the Holy Spirit gives us the courage to live and speak about our beliefs to our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as to unbelievers.

At Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled His promise. The Holy Spirit came with the noise and force of a divine wind and put tongues of fire over each of the Apostles, enabling them to speak in different languages. The Holy Spirit thereby transformed the Apostles from fearful men cowering behind locked doors into courageous missionaries proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Holy Spirit is present in the Sacraments of the Church. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit works through the holy water to take away Original Sin and actual sins and to give us new life with God. In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit is conferred upon us when the bishop (a successor of the Apostles) anoints our head with chrism oil. Through this sealing of our faith, and provided we open our hearts, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to pursue the mission of Christ by proclaiming His saving message and thereby transforming the world. Most significantly, in the Consecration at every Mass, the Holy Spirit changes the bread and wine into the actual Body and Blood of Christ.

***Reflect: Do I accept all of the Church’s teachings or only the ones I like?***

***Pray: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Spirit - Part II**

(CCC 687-747)

The Holy Spirit is known by many names. We call Him Paraclete, Advocate, Spirit of Truth, and Spirit of Christ, names that describe Him as a supporter and consoler who wants to fill us with inspiration and encouragement. When we learn how to be open to the Holy Spirit, He gives us the gift of understanding, which enables us to know Jesus; the courage to boldly proclaim His saving message; and the perseverance to live our lives in imitation of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit actually transforms our bodies into temples of God and our souls into dwelling places for Jesus Christ. We may not do great things in life, but we can and must respond to God's call to do everyday things with great love.

Love is God's first gift to us and contains all others. God pours out this gift of love to us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is love itself. Love can change those we meet and change us too. Because of the Holy Spirit, our whole being, mind, heart, soul, and body can be infused with love.

A beautiful example of the Holy Spirit's transforming power can be seen in the life of Mary, the Blessed Mother. She is God's masterpiece, created to be a luminous witness of grace from the moment of her Immaculate Conception. The angel Gabriel rightly called her "full of grace." It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary conceived Jesus, the Son of God. Through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring us into communion with Jesus. But we must be humble in order to accept the Holy Spirit. We learn from Scripture that the humble are always the first to accept God: Mary, the shepherds outside Bethlehem, the magi traveling from the east, Simeon and Anna at Jesus' presentation in the Temple, the bride and groom at Cana, and the first disciples on the Sea of Galilee. We must seek to follow their example of humility.

***Reflect: What would the world look like if everyone heeded the call to love God and love our neighbors?***

***Pray: O King of glory, send us the Promise of the Father, the Spirit of Truth. May the Counselor Who proceeds from You enlighten us and infuse all truth in us, as You have promised. Amen.***

### **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Spirit - Part III** (CCC 687-747)

The Holy Spirit is the last Person of the Trinity to be revealed in Scripture. In the Old Testament, we see the Father clearly, but the Son less directly. While the Holy Spirit was speaking through the prophets, He was hidden from view. In the New Testament, the Son is fully revealed. We also see the divine action of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, in John the Baptist, throughout Jesus' ministry, and at Pentecost. Now, the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and among us and gives us a clearer vision of Himself. We see that from the very beginning, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have been a part of the loving plan of our salvation. When the Father sends the Son, He also sends the Holy Spirit; they are distinct but inseparable. The Holy Spirit continues to give us knowledge of God and is living and active in building, animating, and sanctifying the Church today.

The Catechism sets out eight powerful ways in which the Holy Spirit can help you experience His presence: (1) Study Scripture, which the Holy Spirit inspired. You will sense His presence. (2) Read the lives of the saints. Their teachings and example, shaped by the Holy Spirit, will motivate you to holiness. (3) Obey all the teachings of the Magisterium (the Pope and Bishops' teaching authority) and you will be guided by the Holy Spirit. (4) Actively participate in the Church's liturgy and Sacraments, most especially the Eucharist. You will receive the Holy Spirit. (5) Give yourself to prayer each day. The Holy Spirit will pray within you and intercede for you. (6) Participate in the missionary and apostolic efforts of the Church. You will sense the Holy Spirit at work in the world. (7) Recognize the spiritual gifts and ministries that help build the Church. You will come to understand that the Holy Spirit is providing the Church with the leadership we need. (8) Study the Church's Tradition, history, and the holy witness of the saints. You will sense the Holy Spirit's sustaining power through it all.

***Reflect: Can I commit to reading Scripture and praying for 20 minutes every day this week?***

***Pray: Lord Jesus Christ/ Son of the living God/ have mercy on me/ a sinner. As you pray, close your eyes. Breath in on the first phrase, out on the second, in on the third, and out on the fourth. Say this prayer throughout your day.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part I** (CCC 748-975)

In the Creeds, we profess our belief in the Holy Catholic Church. When we do so, we are affirming our belief that the Church is a holy mystery founded by the Holy Trinity as part of God's eternal plan for our salvation. While the Church has a visible, physical reality, it remains a mystery because it also has an active, divine spiritual reality that can only be seen with the eyes of faith.

We see the Church's origins in the chosen people of Israel in the Old Testament. We see the Church established by Jesus through His words, actions, death, and Resurrection. We see the Church receive the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The Church includes all people who God calls to holiness and gathers together. The assembled people, through their faith and Baptisms, become children of God, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. And, despite the personal sinfulness of her members, the Church always remains holy because of the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Church.

The Church's mission is to proclaim and work to fully establish God's Kingdom among everyone in the world. The Church helps all people reconcile and commune with God. It also facilitates the unity of all humanity.

In order to help us understand the mystery of the Church, Sacred Scripture uses many images, each of which shows a different aspect of the Church. The Old Testament uses the image of the Israelites as the people of God. The New Testament uses the image of the people of Church as a body and Jesus as the head. Scripture also uses different images from rural life (sheepfold, flock, sheep), from farming (field, olive grove, vineyard), from construction (home, stone, temple), and from family life (spouse, mother, family).

***Reflect: When you think about your identity, is your membership in the Catholic Church the first thing that comes to your mind? Why or why not?***

***Pray: Heavenly Father, look upon the Church of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to witness to His love by loving all our fellow creatures without exception. Under the leadership of the Holy Father and the Bishops keep us faithful to Christ's mission of calling all men and women to your service so that there may be one fold and one shepherd. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.***

## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part II**

(CCC 748-975)

We often say that the Church is the “people of God.” This is because God chose to sanctify and save us as a people gathered together in the unity of the Trinity and the Church, not as isolated individuals. The People of God have characteristics that make them unique compared to every other group in the world. As the People of God, we are quite literally God’s people. We are not born as members; we join through our Baptisms and our faith in Christ. Together, we form one body with Jesus as our head. As members, we gain our dignity and freedom as the sons and daughters of God. Our law is that we love others as Jesus loves us. Our mission is to be salt of the earth and light of the world. Our destiny is to form and extend the Kingdom of God, which God instituted and which He will bring to perfection at the end of time.

God the Father anointed Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and established Him as priest, prophet, and king. As members of the People of God, we each participate in the three offices of Christ and take on the responsibilities to fulfill the mission and perform the service that flow from these offices. We share in Christ’s priestly office by virtue of our faith and Baptism through which the Holy Spirit consecrates us. We share in His prophetic office when we study and adhere to our Catholic faith and live in imitation of Christ in the world. Finally, we share in His kingly office when we, like Christ the King of the universe, make ourselves servants of all, especially the poor and suffering.

***Reflect: If you were accused of being a member of the Catholic Church, would there be enough evidence to convict you?***

***Pray: The Prayer of St. Francis: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy; O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.***

### **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part III**

(CCC 748-975)

The Catechism presents several images to help us understand the relationship between Christ and His Church. Christ and the Church are one being: Christ is the head and the members are the body. Christ is also the bridegroom and the Church is the bride and mother of all of God's children. While the first image represents the unity of Christ with the Church and the unity among its members, the second emphasizes that the Church is distinct from Christ, but related in the most intimate of relationships.

We also say that the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit because He resides in the members, and builds up the Church in love and charity through the Word of God in Scripture, the sacraments, the virtues, and charisms (special gifts the Holy Spirit bestows upon members of the Church to help build it up).

In the Nicene Creed, we profess that we “believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” We say the Church is “one” because it arises from the unity of the Holy Trinity. Christ founded the Church to re-establish the unity of all people in one body, and the Holy Spirit unites all the faithful in communion with Christ. The Church has one faith, one sacramental life, one apostolic succession, one hope, and one charity.

The Catholic Church is the one and only true church of Christ in the world. It is governed by the Pope, as the successor of St. Peter, in communion with the Bishops, as the successors to the Apostles. We can only obtain the full means of salvation through the Catholic Church since God entrusted all the blessings of His New Covenant to the Catholic Church alone. This privileged role in the Body of Christ, carries both grace and responsibility, as well as the world's attention.

While Protestant Churches have separated themselves from full communion with the Catholic Church, we believe that these denominations possess many elements of sanctity and truth and that their members are incorporated into Christ by Baptism. Accordingly, we recognize them as brothers and sisters and seek to restore unity with them through prayer and theological dialogue.

*Reflect: It is sometimes said that being anti-Catholic is the last acceptable prejudice in America. Why do you think this is? What will you do to overcome this bigotry?*

*Pray: Eternal Father, we praise you for sending your Son to be one of us and to save us. Look upon your people with mercy, for we are divided in so many ways, and give us the Spirit of Jesus to make us one in love. We ask this gift, loving Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part IV**

(CCC 748-975)

In the Nicene Creed, we profess that the Church is “holy” because God created it; Christ gave His life to sanctify it and to make it a source of holiness for the world; and the Holy Spirit gives it its life and charity. In the Church, we find the fullest means of our salvation. The Church calls us, helps us to become holy, and promotes holiness to the world. Mary and all the Saints are members of the Church; they intercede on our behalf and serve as models for how we should live our lives.

We also profess that the Church is “Catholic” — meaning “universal” — because Christ is present in it. The Church proclaims the fullness and totality of the Christian faith; it bears and fully administers the means of salvation; and it is sent by Christ on a mission to all people. At the same time, each diocese of the Church is also Catholic, consisting of a community of Christians who are in communion of faith and sacraments, both with their Bishop, as a successor to the Apostles, as well as with the Church of Rome. All people are called to the unity of the Church. But we, through our profession of the Catholic faith, participation in the sacraments, and obedience to the Church’s governing authority, are fully in communion with the Church.

We believe that salvation comes only from Christ through the Church. Consequently, someone who knows the Church is founded by Christ and is necessary for salvation, but still refuses to enter it or remain in it, cannot be saved. On the other hand, someone who through no fault of his own does not know the Gospel of Christ and His Church, but sincerely seeks God and tries to do His will as it is known to him by following his conscience can achieve eternal salvation. Because God loves everyone and desires everyone to be saved, the Church — and each of us — is given the vital missionary duty of evangelizing the truth of the Gospel to the entire world.

*Reflect: How can you develop a more urgent desire to be an evangelist?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus, you called your disciples to preach the Good News to the whole world. Help us as your disciples today to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel to all people. Amen.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part V** (CCC 748-975)

The word “Apostle” means “one who is sent.” We profess that the Catholic Church is “apostolic” because it has been built on the foundation of the Apostles; it preserves and teaches the faith that Christ taught to the Apostles; and it is guided by the Pope and the bishops as the successors to St. Peter and the Apostles. The Church continues the mission that Christ gave to the Apostles. As members, we are also called to participate in this mission.

The Church has bishops, priests, and deacons who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders and form the “ecclesiastical hierarchy” that leads and serves the Church. Bishops are members of the “Episcopal College” in communion with the Pope and share with him the duty to care for the Church. Bishops help sanctify the Church by dispensing Christ’s grace through Mass and the sacraments and also by their prayers, example, and work. Bishops and priests exercise their ministry in the name and person of Christ, who is the head of the Church. Priests exercise their ministry in the “Presbyterate” of the local Church in communion with, and under the direction of, their local bishop. Deacons minister to the Church through their service of word, liturgy, and charity.

All of the other members of the Church are called the laity. The laity have the vocation of seeking the Kingdom of God by living in imitation of Christ and proclaiming the Gospel to the world by the witness of their lives, words, evangelizing actions, and catechesis. They also engage in various ministries to serve the community, and they bring their Catholic moral values to other activities and institutions of the world.

In both the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the laity, there are people who are consecrated in a special way to God through “evangelical counsels” (vows) of chastity/celebracy, poverty, and obedience. These consecrated brothers and sisters participate in the mission of the Church through their complete dedication to Christ and to others.

*Reflect: How can you better proclaim the Gospel to the world through your words and actions?*

*Pray: Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.*



## **The One Minute Catechism: We Believe in the Holy Catholic Church – Part VI** (CCC 748-975)

The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Saint Peter. He is the perpetual, visible source and foundation of the unity of the Church. He is the vicar (representative) of Christ, the head of the College of Bishops, and the pastor of the whole Church. Christ gave the Pope full, supreme, immediate, and universal power within the Church.

The College of Bishops, in union with the Pope, and never without him, also exercises supreme and full authority over the Church. The bishops, in union with the Pope, have the duty of proclaiming the Gospel faithfully and authoritatively. By means of a “supernatural sense of faith,” we, as the members of the Church, should totally accept the faith under the guidance of the living teaching authority of the Pope and bishops. The Pope and bishops acting together in this way to teach is called the Magisterium. It is important to remember that not everything the Pope or a bishop says counts as a binding pronouncement on the faithful.

The Pope, alone or together with the College of Bishops (especially when working together in an Ecumenical Council), can also speak infallibly (that is, incapable of making an error) when he proclaims, through a definitive act, a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. The Pope and bishops, acting as the Magisterium, also act infallibly when they agree in proposing a doctrine as definitive. When a matter of faith and morals has been proclaimed under the doctrine of infallibility, we must accept that teaching with the obedience of faith. Many non-Catholics mistakenly believe that everything the Pope says must be accepted as infallible. This is not true. Moreover, contrary to popular misconception, it has been very rare in the history of the Church for the Pope to speak with infallibility, which, again, requires a special act.

(If you are interested in learning more about this somewhat complicated doctrine, see <https://www.catholic.com/tract/papal-infallibility>).

*Reflect: What is the advantage of having a religious hierarchy that defines religious doctrine for the Church?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus, shelter our Holy Father the Pope under the protection of Your Sacred Heart. Be his light, his strength and his consolation.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Communion of Saints and Mary Our Mother** (CCC 946-975)

In the Apostles' Creed, we profess that we believe in the "communion of saints." This expression has two meanings. First, it refers to the fact that all the members of the Church together share in the good and holy things of the Church, including the faith, the sacraments (and, most especially, the Eucharist), the charisms (graces from the Holy Spirit), and in charity. The Church gives us a common bond with each other, in good times and in bad. Second, "the communion of saints" refers to the spiritual union among all holy persons who are united by grace to Jesus Christ. We, the living, are still pilgrims on earth (Church Militant). Others, having died, are undergoing purification in purgatory and are helped by our prayers (Church Suffering). Still others already enjoy the glory of God in heaven and can intercede for us (Church Triumphant). All three of these "Churches," through our love of the Holy Trinity and each other, form in Christ one family, the Church. Mary is the Mother of the Church because she gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God and Head of the body that is the Church. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He gave Mary to be mother to His disciple John. Mary thus became mother to all of Jesus' disciples, including all members of the Church. Since Jesus' Ascension, Mary has helped the Church with her prayers. And, even after her Assumption into heaven, she continues to intercede for the Church and each of us. Mary is our model of faith, charity, and holiness. We invoke her as our advocate, helper, benefactor, and intercessor with Jesus. The Church specially honors Mary through liturgical feasts, like the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and the Assumption (August 15), and prayers like the holy Rosary, the mysteries of which are a summary of the whole Gospel.

*Reflect: In an all too often defiant and self-centered world, Mary provides a perfect model of acceptance, and submission to, God's will. In what ways can you better model your life on Mary?*

*Pray: Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us as we seek new life through your Son, Jesus!*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Forgiveness of Sins and the Resurrection of the Body** (CCC 976-1019)

In the Apostles Creed we profess that we believe in “the forgiveness of sins.” Similarly, in the Nicene Creed we say that we “confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” We make these professions because Christ gave the Church the mission and power to forgive sins through two sacraments. Baptism is the first and principal sacrament through which we receive the forgiveness of sins and are united with Christ. Although Baptism forgives all of our sins, through our free will, we continue to fall into sin. For those sins we commit after Baptism, Christ instituted the sacrament of Reconciliation (also called Penance or Confession) through which we are reconciled with God and with the Church. We will return to both of these sacraments in future installments.

We also profess that we believe in “the resurrection of the body” (Apostles’ Creed) and that we “look forward to the resurrection of the dead” (Nicene Creed). As Catholics, we believe that we have mortal bodies made of flesh united with immortal souls. By virtue of Original Sin, we will all suffer death. Thankfully, by taking on our humanity, Christ redeemed us and opened up the possibility of salvation and eternal life with Him.

During our lives, our bodies and souls are unified. At death, our souls separate from our bodies – at least for a time. Our bodies remain on earth and become corrupt. Our souls, which are immortal, go to meet the judgment of God and await reunion with our bodies. At the end of time, Christ will come again and raise our bodies, which will be completely transformed and reunited with our souls. This is a very important point that many Catholics do not appreciate: Ultimately, you will spend eternity as a unity of your soul and your resurrected body. As we will see next time, what will happen in our eternal lives will depend upon God’s grace and how we lived our earthly lives.

*Reflect: It is sometimes said that the Church’s greatest saints constantly contemplated their own deaths. Why do you think such contemplation is so important to becoming holy?*

*Pray: O Glorious St. Joseph, behold I choose thee today for my special patron in life and at the hour of my death. Preserve and increase in me the spirit of prayer and fervor in the service of God. Remove far from me every kind of sin; obtain for me that my death may not come upon me unawares, but that I may have time to confess my sins sacramentally and to bewail them with a most perfect understanding and a most sincere and perfect contrition, in order that I may breathe forth my soul into the hands of Jesus and Mary. Amen*

## The One Minute Catechism: Life Everlasting – Part I (CCC 1020-1065)

We come now to the last lines of the Apostles' Creed – “I believe in . . . life everlasting” – and the Nicene Creed – “I believe in the life of the world to come.” In these lines, we profess our belief in life beyond our mortal lives. This can be difficult for many people to ponder, given that we are constantly told to live in the here and now. As Catholics, however, we embrace the reality that our mortal lives are simply the time in which we can either accept or reject Jesus Christ's divine grace. We know that death will put an end to this time of choice. We believe that our earthly deaths will be the immediate start of our eternal lives, which will have no end. We also believe that after we die, we will each receive a particular judgment from Jesus Christ, who is the Judge of the living and the dead.

Our particular judgment at death will be based upon our faith and our works during our earthly lives. This judgment will result in entrance into the happiness of heaven, immediately or after an appropriate purification in purgatory, or entry into the eternal damnation of hell. Our particular judgment at our death will be reaffirmed in the final, universal, and last judgment, which Jesus Christ will issue when He returns as the Judge of the living and the dead at the end of the world. After the last judgment, our resurrected bodies will share in the judgment of heaven or hell that our souls received in our particular judgment, and the universe will see the full realization of the Kingdom of God.

Heaven is the state of supreme and definitive happiness where those who die in the grace of God and have no need of further purification are gathered around Jesus and Mary, the angels, and the saints. They thus form the Church of heaven (the Church Triumphant), where they see God “face to face,” live in a communion of love with the Most Blessed Trinity, and intercede for us here on earth.

*Reflect: The Church often speaks of the Last Four Things: Death, Judgement, Heaven, or Hell. When was the last time you spent time reflecting on these things?*

*Pray: Lord, my Rock and Redeemer, thank you that you are great and abundant in power; your strength is beyond measure. The Bible says that you are able to bless me abundantly, so that in all things at all times, you will supply everything I need, and I will abound in every good work. Give me the strength I need today Lord. May I thrive in the power of your spirit. May your love be the passion in my heart. May your joy be my strength when times are hard. May your presence be my peace that overflows. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Life Everlasting – Part II (CCC 1020-1065)

Recall that we have been discussing our particular and last judgments and our destiny to join God in heaven, immediately or after purification in purgatory, or to be separated from God in hell.

Purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship but who still need to be purified before they can enter heaven. As part of the communion of saints, we the faithful can help the poor souls in purgatory by offering prayers and Masses for them. We can also help them through almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance (which is why many of our parents told us to "offer up" our suffering for the "souls in purgatory").

Hell is the eternal damnation of those people who die in mortal sin through their own free choice. The principal suffering of hell is eternal separation from God in whom alone we can have the life and happiness for which we were created and for which we long while here on earth. The existence of hell is firmly established in both Scripture and the Church's teaching and tradition, which call us to use our freedom wisely with a constant view to our eternal destiny.

Many people find it difficult to reconcile the existence of hell with the infinite mercy and goodness of God. But God does not destine anyone to hell. Instead, some humans, through their exercise of their free wills, exclude themselves from communion with God by persisting in mortal sin and refusing the merciful love of God through the moment of their deaths. In essence, it is a person's free choice to choose hell. Why someone would make this choice is the real mystery. Nonetheless, we see people who single-mindedly embrace lives of sin and dissipation, ignoring God's commands and choosing to exercise their free wills to decide what is "true" for them as though they were gods in charge of their destinies.

We conclude our professions of faith with the word "*Amen*," which is a Hebrew word for "yes". In using this word, we are expressing our confidence and acceptance in the truths we have professed.

*Reflect: Do you know someone who rejects God? What can you do to help them?*

*Pray: O God, who dost show to them that are in error the light of Thy truth, that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant to all those who profess themselves Christians to reject those things that are contrary to that name, and follow such things that are agreeable to the same. Through our Lord.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: Introduction to the Liturgy and the Sacraments – Part I** (CCC 1066-1209)

We now begin the second part of the Catechism. Having examined the Creed, our focus moves to the Liturgy and the Sacraments.

Liturgy embraces all of the official public worship and prayer life of the Church. The word “liturgy” comes from Greek and refers to “a publicly performed work on behalf of an organized community.” In Catholic liturgy, Christ, as head of the Church, acts through His body, the Church. The Holy Trinity is the center of all liturgy: We worship God the Father, through the Son, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. In liturgy, we learn about and participate in Christ’s Paschal Mystery, through which Christ saves us. And the Holy Spirit draws us together through liturgical actions, the most important of which are the Eucharist and the other Sacraments.

The entire Church community celebrates the liturgy. Christ calls each of us to actively participate in the liturgy, to make our thoughts conform to what we say and hear, and to cooperate with the divine grace we receive through the Sacraments. Within the liturgy, priests have a special office to act in the person of Christ, most especially in the Liturgy of the Eucharist and other Sacraments.

The Church celebrates the liturgy and Sacraments using many signs, symbols, and rituals, including scriptural readings, homilies, music, processions, blessings, bread, wine, oil, physical gestures and postures, incense, holy water, candles, and ritual vestments. We celebrate in a holy physical environment in which the art and architecture reflect the transcendent mystery of God as well as the unity of His people. We use all of these things to help us experience God’s invisible presence. The Liturgy of the Word is especially important and is part of all sacramental celebrations. Christ speaks to us through this reading of Sacred Scripture, enlivening our faith and helping us to have a deeper appreciation of the liturgical celebration.

The Church recognizes seven liturgical traditions or “rites”: Latin (Roman), Byzantine, Alexandrian (Coptic), Syrian, Armenian, Maronite, and Chaldean. The Church holds all of these rites to be equal in right and dignity and seeks to preserve each.

*Reflect: Do you actively participate in the Mass and help others around you do so? Or do you talk, fidget, look at your phone, daydream, or allow your children to disrupt the liturgy?*

*Pray: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To You, O Lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me Your love and Your grace, for this is sufficient for me. Amen.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Introduction to the Liturgy and the Sacraments – Part II (CCC 1066-1209)

The Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ from the Incarnation until the day of Pentecost and the expectation of Christ's return in its Liturgical Year. During the year, we celebrate Advent, the Christmas Season, Lent, the Easter Season, and Ordinary Time. The high point of the Liturgical Year is the Easter Triduum, which goes from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday.

Throughout the Liturgical Year, the Church venerates Mary with a special love and a number of feast days. We do so because Mary is the purest model of discipleship, which we should all seek to emulate. She prays for us, loves us, and always brings us to Christ. The Church also offers commemorations of the martyrs and other saints. These feasts and memorials are occasions for us to praise God for the martyrs' and saints' identification with Christ's Paschal Mystery. In their lives, we also find innumerable examples of how to love God and others and of heroic courage in living one's faith regardless of the cost. In addition, we are able to rely upon Mary and the saints to intercede on our behalf when we present our needs to God in prayer.

Closely tied to Mass and the Eucharist in the daily liturgical life of the Church is the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Morning and Evening Prayer. These are special meditative prayers available for all members of the Church to pray each day (*see* <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours>).

While liturgical worship is not limited to any one place, whenever the political climate allowed, the Church has built consecrated houses where the faithful gather for public worship and personal prayer. Most significantly, the Eucharist is celebrated and housed in our churches. Churches should be dignified and beautiful places that foster prayer and a sense of the sacred. They should be a glimpse of heaven on earth.

*Reflect: Who is your favorite saint? Why? What is your favorite church? Why?*

*Pray: Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but, in your mercy, bear and answer me. Amen*

## **The One Minute Catechism: Introduction to the Liturgy and the Sacraments – Part III** (CCC 1066-1209)

The word Sacrament refers to a particular celebration and experience of Christ and His saving work. The Sacraments are real and effective signs that give grace. Christ instituted them and entrusted them to the Church. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, divine life is dispensed to us through the Sacraments when they are properly received.

Grace is God's free and loving gift of a share in His life. God's grace heals us and draws us closer to Him. God shows us His love and shows us how He wills our salvation. Our faithful response to God's grace received through the Sacraments is also a gift of grace. The Sacraments each have a visible and invisible reality. Our senses experience the physical reality, but our faith allows us to grasp the invisible reality of God's grace.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church recognizes the existence of Seven Sacraments instituted by Christ: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (Sacraments of Initiation); Penance and Anointing of the Sick (Sacraments of Healing); and Holy Orders and Matrimony (Sacraments at the Service of Communion).

Through the Sacraments, we grow in personal and communal holiness. Jesus gave us the Sacraments to call us to worship God, to build up the Church, to deepen our faith, to show us how to pray, to connect us with the living Tradition of the Church, and to make us holy. While God works primarily through the Sacraments, He also touches us through the community of the Church, through the lives of holy people, through prayer, spirituality, and acts of love. As Catholics, the Sacraments are necessary for our salvation.

Next, we will turn to an in depth examination of each of the seven Sacraments.

*Reflect: To properly receive the Eucharist you must not be conscious of having committed a mortal sin. Fortunately, we can be forgiven our mortal sins through the Sacrament of Penance before Mass.*

*Pray: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.*



## **The One Minute Catechism: Baptism – Part I** (CCC 1210-1284)

The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are called the sacraments of initiation because they are the foundations of our Christian life. We are reborn in Baptism, strengthened in our faith through Confirmation, and continually nourished by the Eucharist.

To “baptize” means to “immerse” in water. At our Baptism, we were plunged into water to symbolize dying with Christ and then rising and being reborn as a new person. Baptism is the first sacrament we receive as Christians, and it is the gate to life in the Church. We must first be baptized before we can receive the other sacraments.

Baptism takes away original sin, all personal sins, and relieves the baptized person of any punishment due to sin (as of the moment of Baptism). We receive a sanctifying grace, become a participant in the divine life of the Holy Trinity, and are incorporated into Christ and His Church. From the moment of our Baptism, we belong to Christ forever and are marked with His indelible seal. Baptism also bestows on us the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as well as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. While Baptism does not take away our inclination to sin (called concupiscence), the grace we receive does help us to resist and overcome our sinful inclinations.

Since the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles at Pentecost, the Church has administered Baptism to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Any person who has not yet been baptized is able to receive Baptism. We only receive Christian Baptism once in our lives, which is why people from other Christian denominations do not need to be baptized if they convert to Catholicism.

*Reflect: The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus' final command before He ascended into Heaven as: "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." How are you contributing to this mission?*

*Pray: For a newborn child: God, our Creator, cherish this child. Jesus, our Savior; protect him/her. Holy Spirit, our comforter, strengthen him/her.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: Baptism – Part II**

(CCC 1210-1284)

While practice has varied over time, since the earliest days the Church has baptized infants. It remains the practice today for Catholic parents to have their babies baptized not long after they are born. The Church baptizes infants because every human is born with original sin. Consequently, we all need to be freed from the power of the devil and brought into the true freedom of the Catholic faith. Clearly, we need to receive this grace in our lives as soon as possible.

The essential ritual of Baptism involves immersing the candidate in water or pouring water over his or her head while invoking the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Next, the candidate is anointed with sacred chrism (perfumed oil) and is thereby anointed by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into Christ. Everyone who is to be baptized is also required to make a profession of faith. Adult candidates do this for themselves, while parents do it on behalf of their babies. Additionally, the baby's godfather and godmother, along with the whole Church community, share the responsibility for baptismal preparation (catechumenate). Parents, godparents, and the community must also help ensure that the grace and faith received through Baptism are developed and safeguarded throughout a person's life.

We also receive our names at Baptism. Names are very important because God knows each of us by our name, which is a core part of our uniqueness as human beings. According to the Catechism, it is preferable to choose a saint's name for a Catholic child. The saint then offers a model of sanctity and an assurance that this saint will act as an intercessor for the baptized person before God.

Generally, a Bishop or priest performs Baptisms, but deacons can also do so. In case of an emergency, any person (even a non-Christian) can baptize someone provided he or she has the proper intent. Such "emergency" Baptisms are done by pouring water on the head of the candidate while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

*Reflect: How would you respond to someone who criticized the Church's practice of infant Baptism?*

*Pray: O heavenly Patron, whose name I have the honor to bear, pray earnestly at all times to God for me; confirm me in the faith; strengthen me in virtue, defend me in the battle of life; so that, conquering the enemy of my soul, I may deserve to be rewarded with everlasting glory. Amen.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Baptism – Part III (CCC 1210-1284)

As Catholics, we believe Baptism is necessary for salvation for anyone who is aware of the Gospel and who has had the possibility of asking for the sacrament. But we also believe that since Christ died for the salvation of everyone, anyone who dies for the faith before he or she has been baptized can be saved. This is known as the “Baptism of Blood.” In addition, anyone who is in the process of conversion to Catholicism (known as a Catechumen) but dies prior to his or her Baptism can be saved. Similarly, anyone who is ignorant of Christ and the Church but still (under the impulse of grace) sincerely seeks God and strives to do His will can also be saved without Baptism. These latter two cases are known as the “Baptism of Desire.”

What about babies who die before they are baptized? The Church in her liturgy entrusts children who die without Baptism to the mercy of God. In other words, there are “reasons to hope that infants who die without Baptism may be saved and brought into eternal happiness, even if there is not an explicit teaching on this question found in Revelation.” International Theological Commission, *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized* (available at [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070419\\_un-baptised-infants\\_en.html#](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_en.html#)). The Church no longer speaks of unbaptized babies going to “limbo” (which, in fact, was always only a theological theory, not a part of the teaching of the Church’s Magisterium). Nonetheless, it remains critically important to baptize babies soon after they are born.

*Reflect: The Catechism stands in stark contrast to the prevailing ethos of the world where everyone “does their own thing,” believes whatever they feel like, and demands not to be judged. Are you willing to defend our faith in this increasingly hostile world?*

*Pray: Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me; to you, O Lord, now I return it; all is Yours, dispose of me wholly according to your Will. Give me only Your love and Your grace, for this is enough for me. – St. Ignatius of Loyola.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: Confirmation**

(CCC 1285-1321)

Confirmation is one of the sacraments of initiation. We receive it in order to confirm and strengthen the grace we received at Baptism. Through Confirmation, we receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit like the Apostles received on Easter night and at Pentecost. This outpouring puts a permanent mark, or character, on our souls. We become more perfectly joined to Christ and His Church and receive special strength from the Holy Spirit. This strength allows us to become true witnesses of Christ and to spread and defend our Catholic faith by both word and action.

The essential rite of Confirmation is the anointing of the candidate (also called a confirmand) on his or her forehead with Sacred Chrism. The Sacred Chrism is a mixture of oil and balsam that has been consecrated by a bishop during the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. The Confirmation minister, always a bishop absent exceptional circumstances, then lays his hands on the candidate and says, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Only someone who has been baptized can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Like Baptism, Confirmation can be received only once. Candidates for Confirmation, as in Baptism, seek the spiritual help of a sponsor. They undergo a period of prayer and instruction (catechesis) and must be committed to the responsibilities they are assuming. Candidates also choose a Confirmation name. They are encouraged to retain their baptismal name or, if spiritually beneficial, they might choose the name of a saint or a mystery of Christ, which is especially informative to the candidate’s faith life. To receive Confirmation effectively, candidates must be in the state of grace, which means they have recently gone to Confession and are without serious sin. Confirmation can be received between the ages of 7 and 18. But a younger child may be confirmed if there is a grave risk of death. Earlier in Church history, babies received Confirmation immediately after their Baptisms, a practice called Chrismation that continues in the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church.

*Reflect: Always be dissatisfied with what you are if you want to arrive at what you are not yet. St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 169, 18.*

*Pray: God, grant me: The gift of wisdom to see the world through Your eyes; the gift of counsel to make difficult decisions; the gifts of knowledge and understanding 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 the difficulties and disappointments; the gift of piety to be able to express my special love and commitment to You; and the right kind of awesome fear that makes me pause to wonder and revere Your love. Amen*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part I**

(CCC 1322-1419)

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. The Eucharist is Christ Himself. It is not a mere symbol. As we will emphasize throughout this series:

**The words of the Consecration actually transform the substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Christ is really and truly present in Holy Communion.**

The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life,” both causing and signifying our communion with God and our unity as a Church. All of the other sacraments, ministries, and works of the Church are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. As St. Thomas Aquinas taught, while all of the other sacraments contain the power of Christ, only the Eucharist contains Christ Himself. And, as Bishop Robert Barron has eloquently explained, the Eucharist is indispensable spiritual food: Without it we starve to death spiritually. But every time we receive it with true belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, we are made more ready for eternal life with Him.

Because this topic so very important, we will review the Catechism’s sections on the Eucharist in great detail. Hopefully, by the time you are through reading, you will have a better understanding of this critical part of our Catholic faith. As Catholics, we all must embrace our non-negotiable belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Indeed, if you do not, you are rejecting the essential belief of our Church.

*Reflect: Because the mystery of the saving grace of the Eucharist is so profound, we as a Church use a variety of terms to think about and describe it: The Breaking of the Bread; the Lord’s Supper; the Eucharistic Assembly; the Memorial of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection; the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy and Divine Liturgy; the Eucharistic Liturgy; Holy Communion; and Holy Mass.*

*Pray: Thank you God for all the gifts you have given me in the Sacraments. Please remain with me and help me to imitate your Holy Son Jesus Christ in all things, no matter what the cost.*

## The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part II

(CCC 1322-1419)

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper as the memorial of His Death and Resurrection and commanded His apostles to celebrate it until His return. However, the use of bread, wine, and a sacrificial lamb in worship is also deeply rooted in the Old Testament and anticipated in the Gospels. For example, the priest Melchizedek offered bread and wine in praise of God and thanksgiving for Abraham's victory in battle. The Israelites also traditionally sacrificed a newborn lamb to show gratitude to God for each new flock, which contributed to the well-being of the family and tribe. The use of bread, wine, and lamb were also combined in the Passover Meal, which celebrated God's liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, showed God's fidelity to His chosen people, and anticipated the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels, we see the Eucharist anticipated in Jesus' miracles of the loaves and fishes, at the wedding of Cana, and in Jesus' Bread of Life Discourse where He said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. . . . Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within you." (John 6:22-59). When Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, He gave final meaning to the blessing of the bread and the wine and the sacrifice of the lamb.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as well as Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians each describe Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. In instituting the Eucharist during the Passover feast, Jesus gave the Passover a new and final meaning, showing Himself to be the High Priest of the New Covenant and offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice to His Father.

At the Last Supper, Jesus changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood, given, then and now, as an offering for the salvation of all people. And, as we will continue to emphasize, **Jesus is wholly present in the consecrated bread and wine**. We are all familiar with Jesus' words at the Last Supper because the priest repeats them during every Consecration. By His words, Jesus commanded and empowered the Apostles and their successors (the Pope, the Bishops, and the priests) to repeat His actions and words until He comes again. The Church has remained faithful to Jesus' command right up to the present day.

*Reflect: In the Gospel of John, instead of an account of the institution of the Eucharist, there is the narrative of Jesus washing the Apostle's feet during Last Supper, which sets the tone of humble service exemplified by Jesus throughout His life and fully realized in His death on the Cross. John also presents Jesus' Last Supper Discourse, which reflects the Eucharistic themes of divine love, union with Jesus, and a priestly prayer for the Apostles and those who believe because of them. The Church reads this portion of John's Gospel at every Holy Thursday liturgy.*

*Pray: All for Thee, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part III**

(CCC 1322-1419)

Since at least the second century, the Mass, or Eucharistic Liturgy, has had a common structure in all rites of the Catholic Church. There are four essential elements of that structure. The first element is the Introductory Rites, which begin each celebration of the Mass. The Introductory Rites include the Penitential Rite, the Gloria, and the Opening Prayer. United by the Holy Spirit, we gather for worship in response to God's call. Jesus Christ, our High Priest and the Head of the Church, is the principal agent of our celebration. The bishop or priest acts in the person of Christ. We are called to participate actively with conscious, focused, and devout interior attention and reverent external actions. We bless ourselves deliberately, genuflect, kneel, give the responses, sing the hymns, and, when appropriate, remain silent.

The second element of the Mass is Liturgy of the Word, which consists of readings from Scripture, the homily, the recitation of the Creed, and the intercessory prayers (petitions). There are three readings on Sundays and Solemnities and two on every other day. The first reading generally comes from either the Old Testament or the Acts of the Apostles (during Easter); a Responsorial Psalm from the Book of Psalms, which "responds" to a theme in the first reading; a second reading from the New Testament letters; and a reading from one of the four Gospels. The proclamation of God's Word and its explanation provided by the Bishop, priest, or deacon in the homily are meant to kindle our faith and prepare us for an ever-deeper participation in the mystery of the Eucharist. As you have likely noticed, the readings from scripture used for Mass are set on a repeating three-year cycle, with the years being labeled A, B, and C. This helps ensure that every Catholic everywhere in the world hears the same readings each Sunday.

In the next two installments, we will review the other two elements of the Mass: The Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rite.

*Reflect: Mass attendance is appropriately viewed as a right and privilege as well as a sacred obligation. To skip Mass without a valid reason, such as illness, is somewhat like claiming to be a member of a team even though you choose not to show up to games.*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, Thy will, not my will, be done.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part IV** (CCC 1322-1419)

We have been discussing the four elements of the Eucharistic Liturgy. To recap, the first two elements are the Introductory Rites and the Liturgy of the Word. The third element is the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which includes Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Communion Rite. The Eucharistic Prayer is the heart of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It begins with thanksgiving (expressed especially in the Preface). In this prayer, we thank God the Father, through Christ in the Holy Spirit, for His gifts of creation, salvation, and sanctification. We then all recite the Acclamation where we join with the angels and saints in singing or saying the Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus). We then kneel.

The priest, acting in the person of Christ, says the Epiclesis (Invocation) and implores the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine offered by human hands into Christ's Body and Blood. The priest extends his hands over the bread and wine. In many churches, the altar server will briefly ring the bells to signal to the congregation the importance of the Epiclesis and the need to give one's reverent attention to the altar. The priest then recites the Institution Narrative and performs the Consecration. The priest repeats Jesus' words at the Last Supper over the bread and wine. The power of the words, the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit then make Christ's Body and Blood sacramentally present in the bread and wine. In other words, the substance of bread is changed into Christ's body and the substance of the wine is changed into Christ's blood. This "transubstantiation" is absolutely awe inspiring to contemplate.

We believe that Christ is truly and "substantially present" in the Eucharist. Sometimes this phrase confuses people. We do not mean "substantially" in the sense of "mostly" like when we say something is "substantially complete." Rather, we mean "wholly and completely." In other words, the actual substance of the Eucharist is now fully Christ, even as the outward appearance remains the same.

*Reflect: The sinner in his pride prefers his own will to the will of God. -- Fr. Cajetan Mary Da Bergamo*

*Pray: O Lord, increase our faith.*



## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part V** (CCC 1322-1419)

We have been discussing the four elements of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Last time we began the discussion of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is the heart of the Mass. We discussed how the priest, acting in the person of Christ, transforms the substance of the bread and wine into the actual Body and Blood of Christ during the Consecration. After the Consecration, the priest invites us to join him in reciting the Anamnesis (also called the Memorial Acclamation or Remembrance) in which we recall the Death and Resurrection of Christ and look forward to His glorious return. As you likely have noticed, we use three different versions of the Anamnesis (“We proclaim your death, O Lord...”; “When we eat this Bread...”; and “Save us Savior of the World...”).

The priest next recites the Second Epiclesis, invoking the Holy Spirit upon the congregation, to bring unity to all who will receive Holy Communion. He also recites Intercessions, invoking the whole Communion of Saints and all God’s people on earth to join in prayer for the needs of all the members of the Church, living and dead. The priest concludes the Eucharistic prayer with the Doxology (“Through Him, with Him, and in Him...”). We respond, “Amen.” As a rule, the words of the Eucharistic Prayer and Doxology are to be said by the priest alone. Except where a response is called for, you should remain silent and focused during Eucharistic Prayer.

After the Eucharistic Prayer, comes the Communion Rite, which includes, the Our Father, the Lamb of God, the breaking of the Body of Christ, and the distribution of Holy Communion. In our Diocese, it is equally acceptable to receive Communion either on one’s tongue or in one’s hand. The Communion Rite concludes with a closing prayer.

The Fourth and final part of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the Concluding Rite. Following the prayer after Holy Communion, the priest blesses us and then dismisses the congregation.

*Reflect: To properly receive Communion in your hand, place your left hand on top of your right hand and hold both hands up to receive the Body of Christ. Then, use your right hand to carefully pick up the Body of Christ and immediately and reverently place It in your mouth. It is never acceptable to hold onto the Host or to not consume it immediately. If you are bringing Communion to a sick person, you must be trained as a Eucharistic Minister and must always carry the Host in a special container called a pix.*

*Pray: O Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part VI** (CCC 1322-1419)

We now consider some vital truths about the Eucharist. First, we should understand that the Mass is a sacrifice. It is a sacrifice because when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, Jesus Christ makes His saving, sacrificial death present sacramentally to us through the actions of the priest. The Church offers the Eucharistic sacrifice to adore and thank God, to pray for all our needs, and to gain pardon for our sins. The priest links the consecration of the Eucharist to the Last Supper and Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. As a result, the sacrifice of Christ becomes the sacrifice of all the members of the Church. Our lives, our prayers, sufferings, and works gain a new value because they are united with Christ and with His total sacrifice. The offering of Christ also unites the members of the Church here on earth as well as those in heaven.

Second, the Mass is a Holy Meal that culminates in our receiving Jesus Christ's Body and Blood under the form of bread made from wheat and wine made from grapes. We must prepare conscientiously to participate in this Holy Meal. We must be in the state of grace to receive the Eucharist. Accordingly, we must always examine our consciences to determine our worthiness to receive Communion. This examination includes assessing whether we have sinned and whether we have been faithful to the moral teachings of the Church in our personal and public lives. If we are conscious of having committed a mortal sin, we cannot receive Communion until we are absolved from that sin in the Sacrament of Penance. We must also fast from food or drink for at least one hour prior to the reception of Holy Communion. As St. Paul teaches, "[W]hoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the Body and Blood of the Lord...For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body, eats and drinks judgment on himself." (1 Cor 11:27, 29).

*Reflect: The Eucharistic sacrifice also reminds us of the importance of sacrifice in our daily lives. In a willful, self-centered culture where people are taught to do whatever they feel like and to give only when they gain something in return, the sacrifices each of us make in imitation of Christ help to show the reality and power of God's love.*

*Pray: May the Most Blessed Sacrament be forever praised and adored.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part VII**

(CCC 1322-1419)

We continue to examine vital truths about the Eucharist. The Church urges us to receive Holy Communion at each Mass; however, we are only obligated to receive Communion once per year, some time during the Easter Season. Also, since Christ is fully present in both the consecrated Bread and Wine, it is sufficient to receive Him as either bread or wine alone. Communion is more complete, however, when we receive both the Body and Blood.

Holy Communion increases our union with Christ. Just like regular food sustains our physical life, Holy Communion sustains our spiritual life. It moves us away from sin, strengthening our moral resolve to avoid evil and to turn our lives toward God. Indeed, in receiving Holy Communion, we actually receive forgiveness for our venial sins.

As we have discussed, Christ is wholly present in the Eucharist. To help us better understand this sacred mystery of the Real Presence, since the Middle Ages, the Church has used the doctrine of “transubstantiation.” Transubstantiation means that the true substance of the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ while the appearances (color, shape, weight, chemical composition) of the bread and wine remain the same. In other words, in the Consecration, the substance and underlying reality of the bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Christ even though the bread and wine appear unchanged.

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ remains in the consecrated bread and wine even after the Mass is finished. Accordingly, after Communion has been distributed, we place any remaining hosts in the tabernacle. If any of the Precious Blood remains, it should be reverently consumed. The hosts in the tabernacle are “reserved” to provide Communion for the sick and dying (Viaticum). By praying before the tabernacle, we are worshiping in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ. Because Christ is present, we should always genuflect before the tabernacle and genuflect or kneel when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for prayer, as in Eucharistic Adoration.

*Reflect: The next time you kneel before Mass ponder the truth that Jesus Christ is really present in the tabernacle.*

*Pray: My God, I love You with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part VIII**

(CCC 1322-1419)

Holy Communion is a powerful gift. When we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we participate in the Pascal Mystery. Christ's triumph over death is made present in our lives. Holy Communion increases our union with Christ. It preserves, increases, and renews the grace we received in Baptism. It separates us from sin. It helps make our love of God more focused and intense. Our disordered attachments to sin are weakened and even broken. Holy Communion wipes away our venial sins and offers the grace (strength) to help us avoid mortal sin. By deepening our friendship with Christ, Communion makes it harder for us to break our union with Him by mortal sin.

Holy Communion also reinforces the unity and expands the life of the Church. The celebration of the Eucharist Church binds the members of the Church more closely together. As an ancient saying reminds us, the Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church. Holy Communion also commits us to care for each other, most especially the poor, the vulnerable, and those who cannot care for themselves.

As we have learned during the pandemic, participation in the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is a source and means of grace even when we cannot actually receive Holy Communion. The Church has long held that when circumstances prevent us from receiving Holy Communion during Mass, it is possible to make a spiritual communion, which is also a source of grace. Through spiritual communion, we unite ourselves in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and His Real Presence in the Body and Blood.

*Reflect: What do you think would happen to you if you started attending Mass every day?*

*Pray: I adore Thee, O Jesus, God of Love, truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Eucharist - Part IX**

(CCC 1322-1419)

When we receive the Eucharist, we are transformed. Because of the importance of the Eucharist, we must always strive to participate actively in the Mass. In addition to speaking and singing responses, we need to focus ourselves intensely and resist a tendency to sit passively or to allow our minds to wander.

In Holy Communion, we are called to offer our whole selves as a living sacrifice to God. When we receive Communion, we need to remember that we are not changing Christ into ourselves. Rather, Jesus is transforming us into Himself. Only He can do this. But our inner receptivity to this transformation is critical. To receive God's love, we need to open ourselves to it. Our sacrificial gift of ourselves at every Mass is the best way to open ourselves to being transformed continuously into Christ. Then, in and through Christ, we can become bread to feed the world's physical and spiritual hunger.

To understand our faith fully, it is vital that we have a proper understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine. The Consecrated Bread and Wine are not merely a symbol that points to Jesus. Nor is Christ's Real Presence in Holy Communion just some projection of our mind. Christ's Real Presence in Holy Communion is a sacramental and spiritual reality. The consecrated bread has become Christ's Body. The consecrated wine has become His Blood. Jesus Christ is completely and wholly -- substantially -- present in a way that is completely unique. This miracle happens at each Mass by the power of the Holy Spirit through ministry of the priest, who is acting in the person of Christ during the Eucharistic Prayer. We must continually teach our families and each other the truth of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist.

At Mass, when the priest or Eucharistic Minister offers us the Host, he says, "The Body of Christ." We answer, "Amen." This "amen" means, "Yes, I believe."

### **Believe.**

*Reflect: Because he understood the Real Presence of Christ in Holy Communion, St. Thomas Aquinas could not get through Mass without crying.*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, please help me always to contemplate your Real Presence in the Eucharist.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Part I of V** (CCC 1420-1498)

Jesus Christ wants His Church to continue His work of healing and salvation. The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, does this in the two Sacraments of Healing – Penance and Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick.

In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, we obtain forgiveness for our sins and are reconciled with the Church. We also call this sacrament the Sacrament of Conversion, of Penance, of Reconciliation, of Forgiveness, and of Confession. Here, we will just call it Reconciliation or Confession.

So if our sins are forgiven through our Baptisms, why do we need Reconciliation? The reason is that the grace we receive in Baptism does not abolish our human weakness or our inclination to sin (our “concupiscence”). Thus, Jesus instituted Reconciliation so that our hearts can continually be converted and turned back to God after we have separated ourselves from Him through our sins. Jesus instituted this sacrament on the evening of Easter when He told 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). The Apostles transmitted this authority to their successors, the Bishops, who, in turn, share this authority with the priests in their dioceses. Because we continually fall short, conversion and penance are a continuing obligation for all of the Church.

Jesus calls us first to an interior conversion. This means we must radically reorient our whole lives toward Him and away from our selfishness, excuses, and self-justifications. We must cultivate true sorrow and revulsion for our sins as well as a firm commitment to not sin again and to make reparation for our sins. We must have a deep trust in God’s grace and mercy because it is through His grace that we will experience this interior conversion. A true interior conversion will ultimately lead us to do visible works of penance such as fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

*Reflect: Do my sins trouble me, or do I rationalize them away?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, help me to turn my heart, mind, and soul toward you each moment of this day.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Part II of V** (CCC 1420-1498)

When we sin, we commit an offense against God, which ruptures our communion with Him. But it also damages our communion with the Church. For this reason, the Sacrament of Reconciliation provides both God's forgiveness (only God can forgive sins) and reconciles us with the Church.

Before we go to Reconciliation, we must have contrition. Contrition means having true sorrow, detesting the sins we have committed, and being resolved not to sin again. Contrition is "perfect" when it is motivated by our love for God. In contrast, it is "imperfect" when we are motivated by something else, like our fear of punishment and damnation. We must also undertake a careful examination of conscience. We do this by thinking about the ways we have sinned by hurting others and by breaking the Ten Commandments or the Precepts of the Catholic Church. It is always best to consult a guide for examining your conscience. A very good one is available at: [www.beginningcatholic.com/catholic-examination-of-conscience](http://www.beginningcatholic.com/catholic-examination-of-conscience).

Once we are contrite and have examined our consciences, we may enter the confessional. We may either sit and face the priest or kneel behind a screen. We then say, "Bless me Father for I have sinned." We tell the priest how long it has been since our last Confession. We then proceed to confess our sins. We must confess all of our mortal sins (in number and kind), but the Church urges us also to confess our venial sins. Although confession of venial sins is not required, it helps us develop stronger consciences and makes us more resistant to sin.

*Reflect: Do I resist going to Confession? Why?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, please grant me the courage to frequently examine my conscience, confess my sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and live in imitation of You.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Part III of V** (CCC 1420-1498)

When we confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we must always do our absolute best to be truthful and complete. Many people find it helpful to bring in notes from their examination of conscience. If we knowingly fail to confess a sin, that is itself a sin. It is also counterproductive. As the Church teaches, a doctor cannot heal you if you do not show him your wounds. Confession is the only way to receive forgiveness for our sins.

The priest will listen to our confession of sins. He may ask you questions, which you must answer truthfully. The priest will then give you certain acts of penance (also called “satisfaction”) to help you repair the damage caused by your sins. Penance is often in the form of prayers but can also be specific good works or actions you must do. The priest will then invite you to say an Act of Contrition (posted in most confessionals) and will then grant you forgiveness and absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The priest is bound by the “sacramental seal” of the confessional to maintain absolute secrecy regarding the sins we confess to him. In the United States, there is also a rule of evidence under federal and all state laws that prohibits a priest from testifying about what someone told him in Confession.

Of note, absolution for certain particularly grave sins (such as those punished by excommunication) can only be given by the Pope, a local Bishop, or specific priests who have been given the authority to do so. But any priest can absolve a person who is in danger of death from any sin and excommunication.

*Reflect: What worries me about Confession? How can I overcome those worries?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.*



## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Part IV of V** (CCC 1420-1498)

There are two consequences of sin. First, we lose divine grace; second, we incur a consequence or “debt of punishment.” Mortal sin deprives a person of God’s grace and incurs a debt of eternal punishment (i.e., damnation). Venial sin deprives us of some of God’s grace and incurs “temporal punishment.” In confessing our sins and receiving absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are restored to a state of grace. We also receive “remission of the eternal punishment merited by our mortal sins, and remission, at least in part for our temporal punishment.” As a result, while we are relieved of eternal punishment after receiving absolution, we may still face some temporal punishment. Any temporal punishment that has not been remitted during our lives must be purged in Purgatory.

We should understand eternal and temporal punishment as a consequence of our sinfulness rather than as God exacting vengeance. Think of it like this: If I jump out of a second floor window and break my leg, my broken leg is not punishment so much as a logical consequence of my ill-considered action.

So what can we do to mitigate our temporal punishment? Certainly, living a good and holy life in which we avoid sin, pray fervently, and continually perform acts of charity such as the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy is critical. Humbly accepting our suffering – offering it up – is also very important. In addition, the Church offers opportunities to obtain “indulgences.” Indulgences provide total (plenary indulgences) or partial (partial indulgences) remission of the temporal punishment due to sins for which we have confessed and received absolution. If we are properly disposed, we can gain an indulgence in certain conditions. The Church dispenses indulgences from its infinite spiritual treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints. We can obtain indulgences for ourselves or for a soul in purgatory.

*Reflect: Do I hate thinking about the concept of sin? Why? Can I really just wish it away because it offends my sense of who I am?*

*Pray: Dear Lord, help me to embrace humility and accept all of the Church’s teachings.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of Reconciliation – Part V of V** (CCC 1420-1498)

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive forgiveness from God. We are reconciled to Him and to the Church. If we have lost it, we are returned to a state of grace. We also receive a profound sense of peace, a serenity of conscience, deep spiritual consolation, and an increase of spiritual strength to help us as we struggle to live as Christians.

Under the Precepts of the Catholic Church, we are only obligated to go to Confession once each year. However, if we have committed a mortal sin, we may not receive Communion until after we have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We can participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as often as we like. We actually benefit spiritually by mustering the humility and courage to go to Confession. On the other hand, it is never sufficient to “just be sorry” and privately confess our sins to God. Indeed, such an approach seeks to substitute one’s personal comforts and preferences for the commands of Jesus Christ through His Church.

Most often, Catholics attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an individual action. Most Catholic parishes offer the Sacrament on Saturdays in the morning or before the Vigil Mass. Many churches, especially in urban centers, offer it several times per week or even daily before or after Mass. The Sacrament is also celebrated as part of a communal celebration or Mass. This is often done during Advent and Lent. In cases of serious necessity (as in imminent danger of death such as being on a military transport that is about to crash), a priest may perform a communal celebration of Reconciliation. In such cases, there is a general confession and general absolution is provided and is effective as long as the norms of the Church are observed and each individual intends to confess his grave sins if he survives the emergency.

*Reflect: What worries me about Confession? How can I overcome those worries?*

*Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the gift of Reconciliation.*

## **The One Minute Catechism: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick** (CCC 1499-1532)

The second Sacrament of Healing is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. This sacrament is rooted in the ministry of Jesus as well as early Church practice. Jesus' compassion toward the sick and the many miraculous healings He performed signify that the Kingdom of God has arrived and will be victorious over sin, suffering, and death. The Church strives to continue Jesus' ministry by caring and praying for the sick and offering the Anointing of the Sick for their benefit.

The Anointing of the Sick can only be performed by a priest or bishop. The celebrant anoints the forehead and hands of the sick person with oil, which has been blessed by the bishop (emergencies excepted), and says a prayer that the sick person will receive a special grace. Any Catholic over the age of reason can receive the sacrament as soon as he or she begins to be in danger of death because of grave illness or old age. Ideally, the person receiving the Anointing of the Sick should first make an individual confession. Once they have received the sacrament, a sick person can receive it multiple times if their illness becomes worse or if they subsequently get a new illness.

The Anointing of the Sick confers a special grace on the recipient that unites him or her to the Passion of Christ for both the good of the recipient and the Church. This special grace also provides comfort, peace, courage, and even the forgiveness of sins if the sick person has not been able to make a confession. Sometimes, if it is the will of God, this sacrament even brings about the restoration of physical health. No matter what happens, the sacrament prepares the sick person for eternal life. In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers people who are about to die the Eucharist as "viaticum" (Latin for "provision for the journey"). Viaticum is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection.

*Reflect: Do you ever think about your own death? Why or why not? Should you think about it more often?*

*Pray: Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that in the hour of our death we may be refreshed by Thy holy Sacraments and delivered from all guilt, and so deserve to be received with joy into the arms of Thy mercy, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Holy Orders – Part I (CCC 1533-1600)

The Church calls Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist the sacraments of Christian initiation. These sacraments assist our salvation by conferring the graces necessary to fulfill our vocations of being holy and evangelizing the world. In contrast, the Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony are directed primarily towards the salvation and service of others. Because of this focus, these sacraments are called Sacraments at the Service of Communion. Those who are ordained or married receive specific missions within the Church and serve to build up the People of God.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, there are three degrees or “orders”: bishop (“episcopate”), priest (“presbyters”), and deacon (“diaconate”). The men who receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders are consecrated, or ordained, to continue the eternal mission and ministry that Christ gave to His Apostles. These men receive a special gift of the Holy Spirit that enables them to exercise a sacred power in Christ’s name and authority (*in persona Christi*) for the service of the People of God.

A man who is ordained as a bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. Today, all bishops are ordained priests first, but a man could be ordained directly as a bishop. Each bishop is a successor of the Apostles and becomes a member of the episcopal college, which shares with the Pope authority over and care for the whole Church. A bishop has the duties of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the particular Church diocese to which he is assigned. Only bishops can ordain priests, deacons, and other bishops.

A man who is ordained as a priest is sealed by the Holy Spirit with an indelible, spiritual character that configures him to Christ and enables him to act in Christ’s name. Priests are consecrated to preach the Gospel, say Mass, provide pastoral care to their parish or assigned ministry, and assist their bishop. Only priests and bishops may celebrate the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and Confirmation. Although priests are ordained for a universal mission, each exercises his ministry in a particular church. Each priest also promises to obey his bishop.

*Reflect: Do you ever thank God that we have courageous men who have chosen to be priests and to dedicate their lives to Christ and His Church?*

*Pray: O my Jesus, I beg you on behalf of the whole Church: Grant it love and the light of your Spirit, and give power to the words of priests so that hardened hearts might be brought to repentance and return to you, O Lord. Lord, give us holy priests; you yourself maintain them in holiness. O Divine and Great High Priest, may the power of your mercy accompany them everywhere and protect them from the devil’s traps and snares which are continually being set for the souls of priests. May the power of your mercy, O Lord, shatter and bring to naught all that might tarnish the sanctity of priests, for you can do all things. – St. Faustina*

## The One Minute Catechism: Holy Orders – Part II

(CCC 1533-1600)

A man who is ordained a deacon is ordained to serve the Church under the authority of his bishop. In fact, the title “deacon” comes from the Greek word for “servant” (“*diakonia*”). Deacons serve both bishops and priests. And, like bishops and priests, deacons may proclaim the Gospel and preach homilies at Mass, assist bishops and priests in the celebration of the Eucharist, baptize, witness the Sacrament of Marriage, and preside at funerals. Deacons also dedicate themselves to a variety of charitable ministries. Seminarians (men training to be priests) are ordained as deacons before they are ordained as priests.

A bishop performs the sacrament of Holy Orders for deacons, priests, and other bishops by laying his hands on the head of the man who is being ordained (“ordinand”) and saying a solemn prayer of consecration. Through this prayer, the bishop asks God to give the ordinand the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit proper to the order to which he is being ordained. While the sacrament does not preserve the ordained man from weakness or sin, the Holy Spirit guarantees that the minister’s sin does not impede the effectiveness and graces of any sacrament he celebrates. Thus, for example, the sins of the priest do not invalidate the consecration of the Eucharist or diminish the validity of absolution received in Reconciliation.

Only a baptized man may receive Holy Orders. In only ordaining men, the Church recognizes herself as bound by Jesus’ choice when He chose His Apostles. Additionally, when a priest performs the Sacrament of the Eucharist, he is acting in the person of Christ and must therefore resemble Christ. Because Christ was a man, it is fitting that the priest, as an icon of Christ, should also be a man. This matter is not open for debate. Pope St. John Paul II declared that the Church has no authority to ordain women and that this judgement must “be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.” (*On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone, Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, no. 4).

*Reflect: Have you ever attended an ordination? If you haven’t, why haven’t you?*

*Pray: Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our priests. Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments. Help our priests to be strong in their vocation. Set their souls on fire with love for your people. Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom. Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel. Allow them to experience joy in their ministry. Help them to become instruments of your divine grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our Eternal Priest. Amen.*

### **The One Minute Catechism: Holy Orders – Part III** (CCC 1533-1600)

No one has the “right” to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Instead, he must be called to the office by God. Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God’s call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church. The bishop then has the responsibility to select only those who are suitable to receive Holy Orders.

In the Latin Church, all candidates for ordination, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” These men willingly give their entire selves to God and the people of His Church. There are limited exceptions to the rule of celibacy as when ordained Anglican or Episcopalian ministers who are already married convert to Catholicism are accepted into the Catholic priesthood and permitted to remain married. Also, in the Eastern Churches, while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. Nonetheless, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests of the Eastern Churches have freely chosen it, especially in the United States. In the East as in the West, a man who has already received the Sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.

Ordination confers a permanent spiritual character and therefore cannot be repeated or conferred for a limited time. For just reasons, someone who was validly ordained can be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to his ordination, or he can be forbidden to exercise them (called a loss of clerical state). However, an ordained man cannot really become a layman in a strict sense because the character imprinted in his ordination lasts forever.

*Reflect: Do you pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood? Do you encourage your young brothers, sons, nephews, and male friends to remain open to God’s call to a vocation?*

*Pray: Immaculate Mary, please continue to protect, strengthen, and guide all of our priests, deacons, religious, and seminarians and give them the power to save souls.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Matrimony – Part I

(CCC 1601-1666)

The Sacrament of Matrimony, like Holy Orders, is a Sacrament at the Service of Communion and primarily directed toward the salvation and service of others. In Matrimony, each spouse serves and seeks the salvation of the other as well as any children with which they are blessed.

There are several essential elements of Catholic marriage. These elements are deeply rooted in God's divine revelation in scripture and sanctified by Tradition. Consequently, these elements cannot be changed. First, marriage is a conjugal union of one man and one woman directed toward their communion and common good and the generation and education of children. Second, this union is exclusive. And, third, absent defects in the initiation of the marriage, marriage creates an unbreakable bond between husband and wife. Although conflict, a spirit of domination, self-centeredness, and infidelity can arise in marriage as a result of original sin, through the Sacrament of Matrimony, God provides the grace to couples to overcome self-absorption and selfishness to live according to His divine plan for marriage and to overcome these forces.

The Catholic Sacrament of Matrimony stands in dramatic contrast to the newly minted legal definition of civil marriage. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court redefined marriage as a consensual union between any two (for now) individuals, regardless of whether such union can ever (biologically speaking) be directed toward procreation, that is based upon a strong (for now) emotional bond, which need not be exclusive and lasts only so long as either of the individuals wills it to last. In contrast to Catholic Matrimony, this redefined civil marriage is contrary to divine revelation about men and women, and it is merely at the service of one's ephemeral emotional fulfillment. Moreover, the suggestion that following God's will for Matrimony – and rejecting the redefinition of marriage – makes Catholics bigoted or hateful is an illogical attack based upon an irrational contempt for Catholicism, not an argument based upon reason, Tradition, or revelation.

*Reflect: The Catechism says, "The well-being of the individual person and both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life." 1603. Are you willing to stand up for this truth?*

*Pray: God our Father, we give you thanks for the gift of marriage: the bond of life and love, and the font of the family. The love of husband and wife enriches your Church with children, fills the world with a multitude of spiritual fruitfulness and service, and is the sign of the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, for his Church. The grace of Jesus flowed forth at Cana at the request of the Blessed Mother. May your Son, through the intercession of Mary, pour out upon us a new measure of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as we join with all people of good will to promote and protect the unique beauty of marriage. May your Holy Spirit enlighten our society to treasure the heroic love of husband and wife, and guide our leaders to sustain and protect the singular place of mothers and fathers in the lives of their children. Father, we ask that our prayers be joined to those of the Virgin Mary, that your Word may transform our service so as to safeguard the incomparable splendor of marriage. We ask all these things through Christ our Lord, Amen*

## The One Minute Catechism: Matrimony – Part II

(CCC 1601-1666)

We are not all obligated to get married. God calls some men and women to follow Him in a life of virginity or of celibacy for the sake of His Kingdom. Those who forsake the great good of Matrimony to concentrate on the things of God are a living sign of the absolute supremacy of God's love and the coming of His Kingdom.

The Sacrament of Matrimony is always celebrated in public, in the presence of a priest or deacon and other witnesses and usually as part of Holy Mass. The man and woman mutually confer the Sacrament of Matrimony upon each other by expressing their consent to be joined before the Church. In doing this, they give themselves to each other irrevocably to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love. The spouses receive the Holy Spirit, Who seals their covenant. Consent is the essence of Matrimony; it is an indispensable element of the sacrament. In order to create a valid marriage, each person's consent must be directed toward true Matrimony, must be conscious and freely given, and cannot be the result of duress or coercion. If there is no valid consent, there is no marriage.

A husband and wife along with their children make up a “domestic church.” This domestic church publicly lives out the communal and familial nature of the Church as the family of God. Each family member plays a role and contributes to making the family a community of grace and of prayer and a school of human and Christian virtue and Catholic catechesis.

When two Catholics marry, no special permission is required, although there are required procedures that must be followed. In contrast, when a Catholic wants to marry a baptized non-Catholic (a “mixed marriage”), or a non-baptized person (“a disparity of cult”), he or she must first receive special permission or a dispensation, respectively, from the Church. In all cases where a Catholic marries a non-Catholic, it is essential that the spouses accept the essential nature of Catholic marriage. It is also necessary for the Catholic party to accept his or her obligation, of which the non-Catholic party must be advised, to continue to live in the faith and to assure the baptism and Catholic education of their children.

*Reflect: What can you do to make your home – your domestic church – a school of human and Christian virtue and Catholic catechesis?*

*Pray: We thank you, O God, for the Love You have implanted in our hearts. May it always inspire us to be kind in our words, considerate of feeling, and concerned for each other's needs and wishes. Help us to be understanding and forgiving of human weaknesses and failings. Increase our faith and trust in You and may Your Prudence guide our life and love. Bless our Marriage O God, with Peace and Happiness, and make our love fruitful for Your glory and our Joy both here and in eternity.*



## The One Minute Catechism: Matrimony – Part III (CCC 1601-1666)

The sacrament of Matrimony establishes a perpetual and exclusive bond between the spouses. God Himself seals the consent of the spouses. As a result, a marriage which has been ratified and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. Fortunately, Matrimony gives spouses the grace necessary to achieve holiness in their married life and to accept responsibly and lovingly the gift of children and to ensure their education in the Catholic faith.

There are several sins that seriously undermine the sacrament of Matrimony. Adultery and polygamy contradict the equal dignity of man and woman as well as the unity and exclusivity of married love. The deliberate refusal to lovingly give one's procreative potential to one's spouse or to interfere with that potential through artificial means, deprives conjugal love of the gift of children. Divorce obviously contradicts the indissolubility of marriage. The Church does permit the physical separation of spouses when, for serious reasons, it becomes practically impossible for them to live together, even if there is hope for their future reconciliation. But as long as one's spouse lives, assuming the marriage was valid, one cannot marry another person. A divorced person (who has not remarried) may continue to participate in the Sacraments of Communion and Reconciliation.

Where there was a defect in the marital consent, however, a Church tribunal may declare a marriage to be null. This is called an annulment. An annulment is not a "Catholic divorce." Rather, it is a solemn finding, after careful consideration of evidence in a formal legal proceeding, that the marriage never existed as a matter of Church law. A person whose marriage is annulled is free to marry because they were never married before.

On the other hand, a person who was validly married in the Church and civilly divorced cannot marry again. Jesus' teaching on this matter is unambiguous: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). The Church encourages divorced and remarried people to continue to live a life of faith, prayer, and works of charity, and to educate their children in the faith. However, they cannot receive sacramental absolution or Holy Communion nor can they exercise certain responsibilities within the Church because their second "marriage" contravenes God's law.

*Reflect: "What seems to me white, I will believe [is] black if the hierarchical Church so defines [it]." St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus. Are you willing to live by this standard?*

*Pray: Dear Lord please give all married couples a spirit of selfless love, understanding, forgiveness, and mercy.*

## The One Minute Catechism: Sacramentals and Christian Funerals (CCC 1667-1690)

Sacramentals are sacred signs, prayers, and actions instituted by the Church to sanctify different circumstances. They include the sign of the cross; blessings; the sprinkling of holy water; prayers such as the Rosary, novenas, litanies, and grace before meals; receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday and palms on Palm Sunday; having our throats blessed on the Feast of St. Blaise; dedications of objects used for the worship of God; religious processions; and objects like holy water, ashes, palms, candles, and medals. While sacramentals do not confer grace the way the Sacraments do, they help open us up to that grace and are a sign of the spiritual effects we receive through the Church's intercession. The Church also recognizes various forms of piety that accompany its sacramental life, including the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries and shrines, pilgrimages, and the stations of the cross.

Exorcisms are a form of sacramental. An exorcism is where the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion. The Sacrament of Baptism contains a simple form of exorcism. In contrast, a "major exorcism" is directed at the expulsion of demons or the liberation of a person from demonic possession through the spiritual authority that Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church. A major exorcism can be performed only by a priest acting with the permission of the bishop. The priest must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church, including concluding that he is dealing with the presence of the Evil One and not a psychological illness, which should be treated by medical professionals.

The Church also celebrates Christian Funerals (*Ordo exsequiarum*), which are not a Sacrament, although the blessings before and after the funeral Mass are sacramentals (for the participants, but not the deceased). There are four principal elements of a Christian Funeral: the greeting of the community and welcoming the body of the deceased, the liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and the farewell in which the soul of the departed is entrusted to God, while the body is buried in the hope of the resurrection.

*Reflect: "What seems to me white, I will believe [is] black if the hierarchical Church so defines [it]." St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus. Are you willing to live by this standard?*

*Pray: Dear Lord please give all married couples a spirit of selfless love, understanding, forgiveness, and mercy.*

## 66. Life in Christ - The Dignity of the Human Person – Part I (Introduction) (CCC 1691-1876)

We now begin perhaps the most counter-cultural part of the *Catechism*: Catholic morality. Our Catholic moral framework, like all our faith, is founded upon reason, creation, and Revelation. As is already clear to the faithful Catholic, our moral beliefs put us in dramatic opposition to the secular world, which though originally built upon Christian moral principles, has lost sight of them.

As Catholics, we believe that we all have inherent dignity as human beings created in the image and likeness of God. God has endowed each one of us with a spiritual and immortal soul, intelligence, free will, and a conscience, which all work together to draw us toward God. The ultimate purpose of everything we do is to attain eternal life with God in heaven for all eternity. We cannot achieve happiness in this life or the next by our efforts alone. We need God's grace. His grace is a supernatural gift that is undeserved yet freely given to each of us. This grace works inside us constantly, and, when we cooperate with God's grace, we correctly form our consciences, always seeking and loving what is good and true and avoiding what is evil.

Christ gave us the ultimate model of how to live in imitation of Him when he preached the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt. 5:3-12.

Thus, through grace and living as Christ taught us – that is, loving God above all earthly things and loving our neighbor as ourselves – we can become worthy of eternal happiness in heaven.

***Reflect: “Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God.” Catechism 1691.***

## 67. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part II (The Meaning of Freedom) (CCC 1691-1876)

God gave us the freedom to act or not to act. We have the freedom, ability, and obligation to act deliberately. Because God gave us freedom, we are accountable for the choices we voluntarily make. Of course, in exceptional cases, our ignorance, carelessness, duress, fear, excessive attachments, or habits may diminish our responsibility for our actions.

Our freedom is inherent in our God-given dignity as humans. Freedom, properly exercised, means choosing to do what is good and avoiding what is evil. Indeed, the more we do good, the freer we become. We become perfectly free when we direct everything we do toward God. On the other hand, when we freely choose to do what we feel like doing rather than what God commands, we abuse our freedom and commit sin. If we choose the path of sin too often, we become slaves to sin. Because the right to exercise our freedom belongs to everyone, public and private authorities must always respect this right. This is especially true in moral and religious matters. We must work to ensure that our freedom to follow our Catholic consciences is protected by our government.

Unfortunately, in modern society, “freedom” has come to mean doing whatever we feel like doing regardless of whether it accords with God’s commands. Such a conception of freedom, however, is completely at odds with our Catholic faith. At the same time, many today assert that humans do not really have free will at all. Instead, these people assert, external forces such as our economic circumstances or our upbringing determine our actions. Such beliefs are false and contrary to our faith.

Original sin weakens our ability to exercise our freedom properly. This inherent weakness intensifies if we continually give in to the temptation to sin. But through His grace, Christ sets us free so that we can choose the good and be His co-workers in the Church and world. And, when we do inevitably fall short, the Church provides the grace of the sacrament of reconciliation to restore our relationship with God and each other.

*Reflect: "God's free revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ is an invitation into the realm of an absolute and divine freedom in which alone human freedom can be fully realized." Hans Urs von Balthasar*

## 68. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part III (Determining Morality) (CCC 1691-1876)

As Catholics, we judge the morality of an act by examining three factors: (1) the object or goal of the act; (2) the intent of the person who acts; and (3) the circumstances of the act, including its consequences. An act is morally good when it simultaneously has a good object, the person acts with good intent, and the circumstances and consequences are good. If the object of the act is evil, the act will be evil, regardless of the person's intent or the circumstances. Said differently, an evil goal always corrupts the act. For example, if the object of the act is the deliberate taking of a human life through abortion, it does not matter if the person acted with the intent to reduce the mother's suffering or to free her from an "unwanted burden."

It is never permissible to do evil so that good may result from it. In other words, the end never justifies the means. While circumstances can increase or diminish the responsibility of the person acting, they cannot change the moral quality of the act itself. The *Catechism* teaches that certain acts, including blasphemy, homicide, adultery, and sodomy, are always wrong because their object is always wrong. Choosing to do such acts entails a willful moral evil that can never be justified by appealing to the good effects that might result from such acts.

Our passions are the feelings or emotions that prepare us to act or not act in view of what we perceive as good or evil. The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy and sadness, and anger. The passions, as natural components of human psychology, are neither good nor bad in themselves. They become good when they contribute to a good action. But they become evil when they lead to evil acts. Consequently, our passions can lead us into virtue or vice.

***Reflect: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2.***

## 69. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part IV (Forming Our Consciences) (CCC 1691-1876)

We each have a moral conscience that allows us to use our reason to judge whether something is morally good or evil and then to act to do what is good and to avoid evil. A prudent person can hear God communicating to him or her through his or her well-formed conscience.

What does it mean to have a well-formed or “moral” conscience? It means our conscience is objectively honest, true, and in harmony with the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. We do not form our consciences based upon our own feelings, our own will, or from the norms of society. Instead, our consciences must totally embrace the teachings of Christ and His Church. The Holy Spirit helps us form and follow our consciences. Prayer and frequent examinations of conscience will also greatly assist in forming one’s conscience. If we do not properly form our consciences, we can make bad judgments and commit evil acts. It is never acceptable to remain deliberately ignorant of what the Church teaches. The *Catechism* is a great resource in forming one’s conscience.

To maintain our moral consciences, we must follow three general rules: (1) never do evil so that good may result from it; (2) do to others as you would have them do to you; and (3) charity always begins with respect for one’s neighbor and his or her conscience; however, this never means accepting as good something that is objectively evil or contrary to Church teaching. Remember, God has determined, and the Church has declared (in the *Catechism* and elsewhere), what is “good” and what is “evil.” Quite often, this will be radically different than prevailing secular “morality.”

As Catholics, we seek to be virtuous. Simply put, having a virtue means having a habitual and fixed character to do good and to be moral. Virtues allow you to perform good acts and to give your best in everything you do. Virtues guide our conduct according to faith and reason. Being virtuous leads us toward true freedom based on self-control and toward the joy that can only come from living a good moral life.



*Reflect: Many people, including some leaders in the Church, place supreme importance upon following one's conscience, even if one's conscience appears to be telling you to do something that is contrary to what God has declared through Revelation and what the Church teaches. Does that make any sense? Does it not appear that such advocates for "conscience" are actually advocates for following one's own will rather than God's will?*

## 70. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part V (The Cardinal Virtues) (CCC 1691-1876)

There are human virtues and theological virtues. Human virtues shape our mind and our will to help us behave morally, control our passions, and avoid sin. We acquire human virtues through God's grace, through education, by our deliberate actions, and by persevering in our efforts to be virtuous. When we repeatedly practice virtues, we become better people. Praying, frequenting the sacraments, and cooperating with the guidance of the Holy Spirit help us develop and practice virtue.

The Church groups the human virtues around the four Cardinal Virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Prudence helps us determine the true good in every situation and choose the right means of achieving it. Prudence also guides the other virtues. The prudent person must have a well-formed conscience. We can then correctly apply moral principles to particular situations to act with resolve to achieve the good and avoid what is evil.

Justice is the constant and firm resolve to give God and neighbor what is due to each. Justice toward God is the "virtue of religion." Justice toward people makes one respect the rights of every person, seek harmony with others, and promote fairness and the common good. The just person always thinks the morally correct way and is moral and fair toward everyone.

Fortitude (courage) ensures that we persevere in difficulties and remain faithful in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens our resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in our moral lives. It enables us to conquer fear – even fear of death – and to face trials and persecutions. It readies us to sacrifice our lives in defense of our faith or a just cause.

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates our attraction to the pleasures of life and provides us with balance in using created goods. It ensures our mastery over our baser instincts and keeps our desires within the limits of what is good and honorable. The temperate person directs his

or her natural desires toward what is good. This enables him or her to behave and speak with discretion.

*Reflect: This coming week, can you resolve to practice at least one of the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance?*

## 71. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part VI (The Theological Virtues) (CCC 1691-1876)

The Cardinal Virtues are rooted in the Theological Virtues. The Theological Virtues are faith, hope, and love (charity). They come from God and help us maintain our relationship with Him. These virtues are the foundation and energizing force of all Christian moral activity. They demonstrate the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in us.

Faith is the virtue by which we believe in God, all that He has said and revealed, and all that the Church proposes for our belief. Through faith, we freely commit ourselves to God and seek to do His will. Catholics must not only keep the faith and live it, but also proclaim it, confidently bear witness to it in our words and actions, and work to spread it throughout the world.

Hope is the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our highest joy. We place our trust in Christ's promises and rely, not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The virtue of hope responds to the desire for joy that God has placed in our hearts; keeps us from discouragement; sustains us during times of spiritual dryness or feelings of abandonment; and opens our hearts in expectation of eternal joy with God in heaven. Hope preserves us from selfishness. Hope is expressed and nourished by prayer.

Love is the virtue by which we adore God above all things for His own sake, and will the good of our neighbors – even our enemies – for the love of God. Love motivates us to keep God's commandments. Love is the greatest virtue. All other virtues are animated and inspired by love. The fruits of love are joy, peace, and mercy. Love demands good acts, including fraternal correction of our brothers and sisters when they sin or hold opinions contrary to the Church.

***Reflect: As St. Paul said so beautifully, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." 1 Cor. 13:4-13.***

## 72. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part VII (The Gifts of the Holy Spirit) (CCC 1691-1876)

God's grace is rarely flashy, magical, or automatic. When we learn how to be open to the Holy Spirit, He gives us seven gifts. We must cultivate these gifts, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and nourish them through prayer and the sacraments. Four of the gifts direct our minds to God – wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge. The other three gifts direct our wills toward God – fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. Together, these gifts help us to be our truest and freest selves, and give us the strength to accomplish our mission as disciples.

The gift of Wisdom empowers us to see and follow God's will. The gift of Understanding helps us to comprehend the meaning of Scripture and the teachings of the Church. The gift of Knowledge helps us to see things from God's perspective and act in a way that is pleasing to Him. The gift of Counsel helps us to see the correct moral choice in the moment, especially in difficult situations. The gift of Fortitude strengthens and grounds our will as children of God so that we can continually overcome our fears as well as the hostility of the world. Fortitude helps us put into action what Counsel makes clear to us. The gift of Piety enables us to respect and obey God as our loving Father and to act as His secure, beloved children. Having Piety means not just following the rules but also always acting as a son or daughter of God. The gift of Fear (Reverence) of the Lord helps us to revere God's power and majesty, balanced by piety, which invites us into a relationship with God. It does not mean being afraid of God.

The Church also teaches that there are 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

***Reflect: "You aspire to great things? Begin with little ones if you desire to erect a very high building. Think first of the foundation of humility. The higher one intends it, the deeper must the foundation be laid." -- St. Augustine of Hippo.***

### 73. The Dignity of the Human Person – Part VIII (Sin) (CCC 1691-1876)

As humans, we sometimes fail and commit sins. In order to accept God's mercy, we must acknowledge our sins and truly feel sorry for them. What does it mean to "sin"? As St. Augustine explained, sin is a word, act, or desire that is contrary to God's eternal law. When we sin, we disobey God, hurt ourselves, and injure human solidarity. Sins can be categorized based upon their object or based upon the virtues or commandments they violate. Sins can be committed through thought, word, action, or failure to act. Sins can be mortal or venial.

One commits a mortal sin when three conditions exist simultaneously: the sin must (1) involve a grave matter (that is, a very serious matter; for example, violating one of the Ten Commandments); (2) be done with full knowledge that the action is a serious sin; and (3) be done deliberately and on purpose. Mortal sin destroys charity in us, deprives us of sanctifying grace, and, if not repented for, leads us to eternal punishment in hell. Mortal sins can only be forgiven through baptism and reconciliation.

One commits a venial sin when the matter involved is less serious or, even if it is grave, when done without full knowledge or complete consent. Venial sin does not break our covenant with God, but it does weaken charity, demonstrates a disordered affection for created goods, and hinders our ability to be virtuous. Venial sin merits temporal punishment, which purifies us. Venial sins can be forgiven through worthy reception of the Eucharist and through baptism and reconciliation.

Committing one sin creates a propensity to sin. If one commits the same sin repeatedly one has a "vice", which is the opposite of a virtue. Vices are perverse habits that weaken one's conscience and incline one to evil. The Church links vices to the seven capital (deadly) sins of pride, greed (avarice), envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and slothfulness (acedia). We are responsible for our own sins. We do not have responsibility for the sins of others unless we deliberately and knowingly

cooperate with or encourage them; for example, by knowingly paying for a woman to abort her baby.

***Reflect: Pope Pius XII said that the greatest sin of our time is “to have lost all sense of sin.”***

#### 74. The Person and Society (CCC 1877-1896)

As Catholics, our vocation is to imitate Christ in all we do. We love God and, as a result, we love our neighbor too. God did not intend for us to live as solitary individuals selfishly chasing our personal bliss. Rather, we are naturally familial and communal beings. We can only reach our full potential as part of a lasting society united with others. Therefore, we should work to encourage community associations and institutions. This process of building up society helps us work together to reach goals that no one person could accomplish alone. It also encourages each of us to take initiative and be responsible, which helps protect our rights.

But the building up of society can also present dangers. The excessive intervention of government in society can threaten freedom and destroy initiative. To combat this danger the Church follows the principle of “subsidiarity.” Simply put, subsidiarity means that (1) decisions should be made at the lowest level of society possible and (2) there are limits to the power of society and government. Following this principle, where possible, policies should be developed and administered at the local or state level, rather than at the national or international level. In addition, responsibility for certain decisions should remain with the individual or the family rather than being assumed by government at any level. To the extent possible, all levels of society should cooperate and work together for the common good, respecting God’s laws and His great gift of human freedom. Following the principle of subsidiarity, the Church opposes all forms of collectivist government such as communism.

In order to achieve good social changes, we must call on God’s grace and appeal to each person’s spiritual and moral capacity to turn his or her heart and mind to God. At the same time, we must also work to change those aspects of society that encourage selfishness and sinfulness. We must always promote the greatest social commandment, which is to love God and neighbor.



***Reflect: If I am honest with myself, do all the political policies I support promote God's commandment to love Him and our neighbor?***

## 75. Participation in Social Life (CCC 1897-1927)

In order to be well ordered and prosperous, human societies need a legitimate authority empowered to make rules and promote the common good. Ultimately, however, God remains the source of all moral authority.

People should be able to freely choose the form of their government. A government is legitimate if it promotes the common good, in a moral way, with respect for the rule of law; it is illegitimate if it does not. The “common good” means the sum total of social conditions that allow individuals and groups to reach their fulfillment. The common good is based upon love, truth, and justice and extends to all people across the world. The common good requires respect for and the promotion of the fundamental rights of the person; the development of the spiritual and temporal goods for individuals and society as a whole; and peace and security for all. The Church calls us to obey the legitimate rules put forth by authorities and to condemn all illegal or immoral actions by individuals or groups because such actions are incompatible with the common good. We are not required to respect unjust laws and measures that are contrary to the moral order. We should also support organizations that improve human life.

Where there is a conflict, political authorities must settle it justly to maintain the common good. The authorities must also operate within the moral law and promote virtue. Additionally, authorities should ensure that food, shelter, clothing, and the other necessities of life are accessible to everyone. The Church does not prescribe the means by which the common good is achieved. But it does call on each of us to participate in promoting it within our families, in our work, and in the public square by participating in elections and public policy discussions. Our duty to promote the common good includes the responsibility to call others to conversion.

*Reflect: Do I condemn every action that violates the moral law or only those I don't like?*

## 76. Social Justice (CCC 1928-1948)

Society ensures social justice when it respects the dignity and rights of each human being and provides the conditions that allow individuals and groups to obtain what they deserve, consistent with their nature and their vocations. We all have the God-given right to equal treatment before the law. Laws that ignore this truth are illegitimate. We possess equal dignity and fundamental rights because we are created by and in the image of God, endowed with rational souls. Christ calls us to live in imitation of Him here and in joy with Him in Heaven in the hereafter. As we all know, God calls us to love our neighbors (even our enemies), including by respecting their rights and dignity and helping them when they are in distress or cannot help themselves. Remember, love here means, “willing the good” of our neighbor. It does not mean love in the sense of having a warm feeling toward someone. No law or government program can cure all of the ills of society, which often arise from our sin and selfishness. Only God’s grace and our love of God and neighbor can do so.

Unfortunately, there are sinful social and economic inequalities that affect millions of human beings, particularly in the developing world. These inequalities openly contradict the Gospel and are contrary to justice. At the same time, we also recognize that God has chosen not to distribute abilities and talents equally, which naturally results in different social outcomes. Nonetheless, God wills that those endowed with particular abilities should share with others and provide for those in need. God calls those who are more able to be kind and generous.

The principle of social solidarity (friendship or social charity) is a requirement of human and Christian unity. We show solidarity by working with each other to ensure equal opportunities, a just distribution of goods, fair pay for work, and by zealously promoting a more just social order. Most importantly, the virtue of solidarity helps us share the spiritual goods of our faith. Sharing one’s faith is even more important than sharing material goods.

***Reflect: What can I do in the coming days to help another person? What can I do to share our faith.***

## 77. The Moral Law (CCC 1949-1986)

God calls us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. This is the entire point of our earthly existence. But, because we are wounded by sin, we are completely dependent upon God's help and grace to save us. We cannot save ourselves. God provides us grace, especially through the sacraments. He also provides us with His moral law to guide us through life.

Simply put, the moral law contains God's guidance on what we must do and avoid doing in order to join Him in heaven. The moral law comes to us in two principal ways. First, God has engraved objective, unchangeable moral truths in our hearts. Theologians call this the "natural law." It enables us to be able to use our reason to distinguish what is good and evil. Unfortunately, because of sin, we are not always able to perceive the natural law clearly and immediately. Indeed, many confuse natural law with what they want for themselves.

The second way God provides His moral law is through His divine Revelation, which came to us in two phases: the Old Law and the New Law. The Old Law expressed the truths naturally accessible to reason. It is summed up in the Ten Commandments, which prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor, and command what is essential to it. While the Old Law did not provide the strength and grace of the Holy Spirit to help us observe the Commandments, it did prepare humanity to accept the New Law.

Christ proclaimed and fulfilled the New Law, which perfectly embodies all of natural and revealed law. The New Law commands us to love God and neighbor and to love one another as Christ loved us. It calls us to live always in imitation of Christ. We can study the New Law in the Gospels, most especially the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), and the moral instruction provided

by St. Paul and the Apostles. Because we cannot rely on our own strength to follow the New Law, God provides the grace of the Holy Spirit, which assists us in living out His commands.

***Reflect: Can one actually be a “good person” if one does not follow God’s moral law in its totality?***

#### 78. Justification, Grace, Merit, and the Call to Holiness – Part I (CCC 1987-2029)

Justification is God’s merciful and freely given act of love that cleanses us from our sins, reconciles us with Him, and makes us holy and just in our whole being. Christ earned justification for us through His Passion. Justification enables us to freely cooperate with God’s grace, but it is not a permanent state of being (this is a key point of contention with our Protestant friends). Because of our human weakness, we can commit mortal sins and lose our justification.

Our justification depends completely on God’s grace. Grace is the free and undeserved gift God gives us to help us respond to His call to be His children and sharers in His divine nature and eternal life. It is the first and primary gift of the Holy Spirit. We must freely accept God’s grace and continually cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We can do nothing on our own. We cannot work our way to heaven through our own unaided efforts. But once we freely accept God’s grace, we are able to love God, follow His commands, and love our neighbors. Our initial response to grace is called conversion.

Catholics recognize different types of grace. Sanctifying (also called habitual or deifying) grace totally transforms us internally; we become holy and sharers in God’s Trinitarian life. When we have sanctifying grace, we are justified and hence worthy of heaven. We receive sanctifying grace in our baptisms. We lose sanctifying grace when we commit mortal sin. We can restore it through the sacrament of reconciliation.

We also recognize actual, sacramental, and special graces. Think of actual graces like pushes from God that help us act in holy ways and grow in sanctifying grace. Sacramental graces are gifts

we receive from each sacrament. Special graces, also called charisms, are gifts people receive that are intended for the common good of the Church, rather than just for our own individual good.

***Reflect: Now that you understand the importance of sanctifying grace, can you commit to going to the sacrament of reconciliation on a more regular basis?***

#### 79. Justification, Grace, Merit, and the Call to Holiness – Part II (CCC 1987-2029)

All grace is supernatural. It depends totally on God's initiative and surpasses our abilities to comprehend or feel its presence. As Catholics, we should hope for the grace to follow Christ until the end of our lives (the grace of final perseverance) as well as for God's reward for the good works we have done with the help of His grace.

Merit means the privilege we receive from God that gives us the possibility of a reward for a good deed. We receive everything in our lives freely from God, not because we have earned anything or have a right to anything. We do not love God in order to earn rewards. We love Him for His Own sake. On the other hand, God does give us the possibility of acquiring merit when we do love Christ, who is the source of our merits before God, with all of our heart. How? By freely responding to God's grace and acting in accordance with God's will we can merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification and for the attainment of eternal life. We can even merit earthly goods if God wills it. No one, however, can merit the initial grace that is at the source of conversion and justification.

God calls us each to holiness and perfect charity in this life. We recognize that we can only do this by freely cooperating with God's grace. We also must understand that the path to holiness comes from taking up our cross and totally following God's will, not our own. And we only reach the end of the path at the final resurrection.

***Reflect: How can you better live your call to holiness in this world that celebrates the individual's will (even to the point of unreality) and self-absorption?***

## 80. The Church Mother and Teacher (CCC 2030-2051)

Being Catholic is a vocation that must encompass every aspect of our lives. It is not a private hobby or something we just do on Sundays. We must be Catholic in every minute of every day. The Catholic Church is not a building nor an international corporation. It is not merely a system of ethics. The Church is the Body of Christ on earth, and we are its members.

The Church gives us the Word of God, through which Christ teaches us how to live. It gives us the grace of the sacraments, which strengthen and sustain us. The Church also provides the examples of Mary, the perfect model of how we must live, as well as the other saints. By leading moral lives, we are worshipping God by making our lives a living sacrifice to Him.

It is the duty of the Magisterium of the Church to teach the faith and help us to put our faith into practice. To this end, the Church has established Five Precepts that set the ground rules for our vocation as Catholics. The Five Precepts are:

- (1) to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation and to refrain from work and activities that could impede the sanctification of those days;
  - (2) to confess one's sins, receiving the sacrament of reconciliation at least once each year;
  - (3) to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season;
  - (4) to abstain from eating meat and to observe the days of fasting established by the Church;
- and
- (5) to help to provide for the material needs of the Church according to our ability.

By following these precepts and living in imitation of Christ, we draw others to the Catholic faith, build up the Church, show the world the spirit of the Gospel, and help speed up the coming of the Kingdom of God.

***Reflect: Am I following the Five Precepts of the Catholic Church? If not, why not start today? Just remember, before you can receive the Eucharist you must confess any mortal sin you have committed, which would include intentionally missing Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation.***

## 81. Introduction to the Ten Commandments (CCC 2051-2082)

When a Pharisee asked Jesus to name the greatest commandment, He replied: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” Matt. 22:37-40.

Jesus’ two commandments are a positive summary of the Ten Commandments (also called the Decalogue, meaning “ten words”), which God gave directly to Moses. The Commandments are:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. I am the Lord your God: You shall not have other gods before Me. | 4. Honor your father and your mother.                      |
| 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain.        | 5. You shall not kill.                                     |
| 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.                            | 6. You shall not commit adultery.                          |
|   | 7. You shall not steal.                                    |
|   | 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. |
|   | 9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.               |
|   | 10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.             |

The first three Commandments concern love of God; the other seven concern love of neighbor. Together, they are a privileged expression of the natural law. Although we can discern them using reason alone, God revealed the Commandments so we can completely understand them.

The Commandments are God’s laws and covenant with humanity. The Church has always recognized their foundational importance. They establish our fundamental duties toward God and neighbor. We are obligated to keep them. Because they form one organic and indivisible whole, to break one violates the whole law. They are best understood not as rules commanding and forbidding. Rather, they are a road map and guide for living life in friendship with God, free from the slavery of sin. They are truly a loving gift from God. And, with His grace, we can obey them.



As we will explore, each Commandment has a rich meaning that has been authoritatively explained for us by the Church.

*Reflect: Today, many people (even some people in the Church) seem, wittingly or unwittingly, to be repeating the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. What is that sin? It is the grave mistake of believing that each individual – not God, not the Church – has the right to define right and wrong for him or herself based upon his or her desires or feelings or even contemporary secular values. Why do you think people do this?*

## 82. The First Commandment – Part I (CCC 2083-2141)

The First Commandment is: **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.”** Ex. 20:2-5.

We believe in God and worship Him alone. We accept His words and authority, have complete faith in Him, and bear witness to Him.

The First Commandment embraces the three theological virtues: Faith, hope, and charity (love). Faith helps us believe in God and fuels our moral life. We should nourish and guard our faith and reject everything opposed to it. As baptized Catholics, we sin against faith by (1) voluntarily and willingly doubting it and persisting in that doubt; (2) incredulity, which means neglecting or willfully refusing to accept our faith; (3) heresy, which means rejecting, or stubbornly doubting, a truth of our faith; (4) apostasy, which means leaving the Catholic faith; or (5) schism, which means refusing to submit to the authority God vested in the Church and the Pope.

Hope is the confident expectation that we will be blessed by God and behold Him in heaven. It is also the fear of offending Him. We sin against hope through (1) despair, which means one stops hoping for salvation, God’s forgiveness, or His help, and (2) presumption, which means believing one can save one’s self without God’s help or confidently assuming one will receive the benefit of God’s power and mercy without changing one’s heart.

Charity requires us to love God above all things and to love our neighbor out of love for God. We sin against charity through (1) indifference; (2) ingratitude; (3) lukewarmness; (4) acedia, which means spiritual laziness, refusing the joy that comes from God, or being repelled by His

goodness; and (5) hatred of God, which means the prideful rejection of God because He forbids sin and imposes punishments for sin.

*Reflect: God understands how difficult it can be for us to follow His Commandments. Never despair when you fall short (we all do)! Humbly acknowledge that you have fallen short, be truly sorry, resolve to be better, and receive God's absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation. Reconciliation can be thought of as spiritual healthcare. We cannot be healed until we go in and confess. And just remember the sweet relief you feel after you receive absolution and perform your penance.*

### 83. The First Commandment – Part II (CCC 2083-2141)

We follow the First Commandment by adoring God, which means accepting Him as creator, savior, and master of all that exists; worship Him both as individuals and as a Church community; pray to Him; submit to His will; offer Him sacrifices, most especially the spiritual sacrifice of our lives, which we unite with Christ's perfect sacrifice; and keep our promises and vows to Him. Adoration is part of the virtue of religion, which helps us to give to God what we owe to God.

The First Commandment forbids worshipping anything other than God. Forbidden practices include (1) polytheism/paganism (belief in many gods); (2) idolatry (worshipping a creature, demon, Satan, power, pleasure, money, fame, race, or the state); (3) atheism; (4) agnosticism (indifference to God); (5) superstition (any departure from true worship of God), including divinization (trying to tell the future), magic, and sorcery; and (6) irreligion (including tempting God by word or action, sacrilege (profaning sacred things or places), and simony (buying or selling spiritual things)). So it is clear, Catholics may not consult with palm readers or fortune tellers; participate in séances; use tarot cards or Ouija boards; or participate in any kind of occult, new age, or wiccan/witchcraft practice because each of these violates the First Commandment. Catholics may do yoga exercises but must reject its religious aspects.

There are also social components of the First Commandment. Everyone has the right and moral duty to seek the truth, especially concerning God and His Church. Once we know the truth, we must worship God, embracing and faithfully guarding the truth. Within the limits of just laws, no one should be forced to act against his or her well-formed conscience nor be restrained in religious matters. It is for these reasons, among others, that the Church is active in society, constantly opposing abortion, its funding, and rules that compel Catholics to participate in abortions.

Finally, Catholics may, consistent with the First Commandment, have images of Christ, Mary, the angels, and the saints. We may use these as aids for prayer and to venerate the person portrayed.

*Reflect: Am I putting other things in my life (career, chores, sports, etc.) before God? To start the process of changing this, try starting each day by saying this prayer by Pope Benedict XVI, "I adore you, my God, and I love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me and made me a Christian." When you feel stressed or distressed during the day, say "Jesus please be with me and guide me." At the end of each day, perform an Examen: Thank God for the gifts of the day, reflect on the good things you did for others, and express sorrow for any sins you committed and resolve to do better tomorrow.*

## 84. The Second Commandment (CCC 2142-2167)

The Second Commandment is: **“You shall not invoke the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.”** Ex. 20:7.

We must respect the Lord’s name because it is holy. We should adore His name and never even say it unless we do so with the greatest reverence. Our reverence for God’s sacred name expresses our respect for God Himself. The virtue of religion helps us keep this sense of the sacred. We begin all our prayers by invoking the holy names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Second Commandment forbids every abuse and improper use of God’s name. We commit blasphemy when we use the name of God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, or the saints in an offensive or disrespectful way. We should never swear on God’s name unless we do so truthfully, with the greatest reverence, and out of necessity (for example, as a witness in court). We may never make false oaths because that asks God to be witness to a lie. Lying under oath (perjury) is a grave offense against God. When we make promises in God’s name, we must keep them.

In baptism, each of us received our own name in the Church. God calls each of us by our baptismal name; it remains our name for eternity. In naming their child, parents may choose the name of a saint who will become a patron to their child and provide a model of charity as well as the assurance of that saint’s prayers. They may also choose the name of a Christian virtue or mystery. Parents should never choose a name that is foreign or adverse to Christianity.

***Reflect: When I say the Lord’s name, do I say it with reverence, or do I use it casually to express anger or surprise?***

## 85. The Third Commandment (CCC 2168-2195)

The Third Commandment is: **“Remember the Sabbath day—keep it holy. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God. You shall not do any work. . . .”** Ex. 20:8-11.

The Sabbath is a special day. For Jews, Saturday was the seventh day of the week when God rested after creating the universe and everything in it. It was also the day when Jews celebrated God liberating them from slavery in Egypt and His permanent covenant with them. The Catholic Church moved the Sabbath to Sunday because that is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Sunday is thus the holiest day of the week. And, because Sunday was the first day of the Jewish calendar, the move of the Sabbath to Sunday symbolizes both God’s original creation of the world in Genesis and Jesus’ new creation of the world through His Resurrection. Catholics can observe the Sabbath and Holy Days beginning at sundown on the day before.

We Catholics keep Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation holy by attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist. Absent special circumstances, such as serious illness or a dispensation from one’s Bishop (like during a pandemic), failure to attend Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day is a grave sin. Recall that attending Mass is also one of the Church’s five precepts.

In addition to being the holiest day of the week, Sunday is also a day when God commands us to rest and relax. God rested on the Sabbath; He wants us to rest and be refreshed as well. Therefore, we should treat Sundays as special days. We should avoid doing unnecessary work and any activities that hinder our worship of God. We should make time to be with our families and friends. As Jesus taught us, the Sabbath is also a day for doing good works.

***Reflect: How incredible that we actually get to receive Jesus truly present in the Eucharist every Sunday. What can you do with your family next Sunday to make it special and holy?***

## 86. The Fourth Commandment – Part I (CCC 2196-2257)

The Fourth Commandment is: **“Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”** Ex. 20:12.

On its face, the Fourth Commandment instructs us to love, obey, and care for our parents. But its meaning is richer, directing us to do everything possible to strengthen the family as the foundation of freedom and civil society. Following this Commandment is our first responsibility after loving God.

A family consists of a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children. As we have learned, marriage and family are ordered to the good of the husband and wife and to the procreation and education of children. The family is a gift instituted by God. It exists even without government recognition, although governments should legally recognize, protect, and promote the family. This model of the family is the reference point for evaluating all other family relationships. It is also the standard for our duties and responsibilities in other important relationships, including between teachers and pupils, employers and employees, leaders and subordinates, and nations and their citizens.

The Christian family home is the place where parents teach the beliefs of our faith, show children how to pray, and instruct them on the meaning of virtue and love. This takes tremendous time and effort. Throughout it all, parents must model proper Christian behavior for their children, most especially love and fidelity. Parents must use their own education and experience to care for the physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and moral needs of their children. Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children and the right to choose the schools they attend. Parents should counsel their children about careers and the vocations of marriage and holy orders; however, they should never try to dictate any outcomes. Lovingly raising children as the Church



teaches helps parents become better Catholics. The family truly is “the domestic church,” serving as a foundation for our Catholic communities as well as the larger society.

***Reflect: When was the last time I told each person in my family that I love him or her?***

## 87. The Fourth Commandment – Part II (CCC 2196-2257)

Children living at home should always love and respect their parents and obey their moral instructions. In turn, adult children should care for their elderly parents with generous hearts. Siblings must love and care for each other through their whole lives. Following all of these teachings results in a stronger family. But remember, a family is not holy because it is perfect, it is holy because God works His grace in it.

Government leaders are given their authority in order to serve the people. Their decisions should reflect God's plan for humanity, be consistent with natural law, and always strive to uphold the dignity of each person from conception until natural death. Catholics have the responsibility to vote, pay taxes, participate in the public arena, defend their country, and help shape society in light of Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Despite the prevailing view of many in society that religion is a private matter reserved for governing oneself, it is part of the Church's and each Catholic's mission to voice Catholic views in the political arena on critical matters of faith and morals. Catholics are obliged to not follow directives from the government when they are clearly immoral. In certain, extremely limited circumstances, Catholics can even engage in armed resistance to political oppression. *See* CCC 2243 (listing five conditions).

The Fourth Commandment also informs our duties and responsibilities regarding immigration. Wealthier nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome immigrants seeking security and economic opportunity they cannot find in their home country. Governments must take measures to protect immigrants once they arrive. Governments are also permitted to establish rules governing the process of immigration and may impose legal obligations on immigrants once they arrive. In turn, immigrants are obliged to be grateful to their new country, respect its material and spiritual heritage, obey its laws, and to assist in carrying civic burdens like paying taxes and serving in the military.

*Reflect: People often say they refrain from voicing Catholic opinions in public because they “don’t want to impose their religion on others.” But every opinion we voice is based upon some value system, whether we realize it or not. Therefore, do not be afraid to speak boldly about what our faith teaches and why.*

## 88. The Fifth Commandment – Part I (CCC 2258-2330)

The Fifth Commandment is: **“You shall not kill.”** Ex. 20:13.

Human life is sacred from conception to natural death because God gave life to each one of us. Because God is the Lord of life, no person has the right to take the life of an innocent human being. Jesus’ calls us to go even further. We must avoid anger, hatred, and vengeance. We must love and pray for our enemies. We must work to create a culture of life that fosters the physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being of all humans and to work to ensure all forms of unjust killing are outlawed.

The deliberate killing of an innocent person is a grave sin, which offends God and is contrary to His law. Self-defense against an unjust aggressor is morally permissible because its goal is the protection of one’s own life or the lives of others. The use of deadly force is permitted if there is no other alternative. Deliberately exposing someone to mortal danger without grave reason, such as through reckless or drunk driving, is sinful.

Abortion is the intentional killing of a human being. It is a grave sin. This is the unchanging teaching of the Church since the Apostles (*see Didache 2, 2*), and it will never change. It is also completely consistent with medical science, which recognizes that an embryo, from the moment of conception, is a genetically distinct, living being. Thus, abortion is never permissible, even for health reasons, especially because procedures exist that protect the mother’s health without directly ending the baby’s life. Abortions carried out because of a baby’s actual or potential disability are particularly grave and cruel rejections of the sanctity of life. It is also important to understand that many forms of artificial birth control cause abortions by preventing the implantation of the newly conceived baby in the mother’s womb. Formal cooperation in an abortion is so grave that it incurs automatic excommunication from the Church.

Many women deeply regret having had abortions. Through the sacrament of reconciliation, these women can restore their relationship with God and the Church. The Church also has many resources to help women who have been victimized by abortion. Pro-Life ministries help mothers choose life for their children by providing prenatal care, assistance in raising children, and adoption services.

*Reflect: We each came into existence at conception. Conception is a distinct point in time, both spiritually and biologically. Do this thought exercise. Draw a line starting from a distinct point. Extend the line indefinitely to the right. As Catholics, we believe our lives begin at that starting point and continue until we die. Proponents of abortion say we should pick another point on the "line" as the starting point at which life should be protected. Do they make this argument because they are looking for the objective truth about when existence begins, or do they make it to justify what they want to do?*

## 89. The Fifth Commandment – Part II (CCC 2258-2330)

From the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life from conception until natural death, several other conclusions follow. Remember as we consider each that, as we learned earlier, good or compassionate intentions or ends can never justify the use of immoral means.

In vitro fertilization is unacceptable because human embryos are discarded in the process. Similarly, embryonic stem cell and cloning research are intolerable because human embryos are intentionally destroyed. In contrast, research on donated adult stem cells is acceptable because no human being is destroyed.

Turning to the end of life, intentional euthanasia is murder and a grave sin. Suicide, either done alone or aided by a doctor, is also gravely sinful. We have a moral obligation to oppose legalized suicide. That said, serious psychological disturbance, anxiety, torture, or fear can diminish a person's responsibility for taking his or her life. We should not despair for the eternal salvation of such people because we believe that God can provide them the opportunity to meaningfully repent for their sins. The Church offers pastoral care for those impacted by the suicide of a loved one.

Regarding end-of-life care decisions, the Church teaches that we may discontinue medical procedures that are burdensome, extraordinary, and disproportionate to the expected outcome. But we may never agree to cutting off ordinary medical treatment and nourishment, which would constitute the intentional killing of the patient. Additionally, we must treat the bodies of the dead with love and respect. Cremation is permitted if it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body.

We must take reasonable care of our physical health and that of others while avoiding body obsession and every kind of excess related to our health. Taking or selling drugs are grave sins. Offenses against bodily integrity like kidnapping, torture, mutilation, and sterilization are immoral.

*Reflect: The nation of Belgium (purportedly Catholic) permits people under the age of 18 to get medical assistance in committing suicide. Is it really compassionate to tell anyone that they are better off dead?*

## 90. The Fifth Commandment – Part III (CCC 2258-2330)

The Church supports the punishment of criminals, but punishment should be proportional to the offense and aimed at delivering justice, defending public safety and order, and rehabilitating the offender. The Church now opposes capital punishment in all cases because it attacks the dignity of the person, deprives offenders of the possibility of redemption, and, in light of modern prisons, is not necessary to incapacitate dangerous criminals.

The Fifth Commandment teaches us to seek peace between all peoples. We must seek to avoid war and avoid all actions that could lead to war. While every possible means must be taken to avoid war, there are times when the use of force is necessary and permissible to correct a clear injustice, such as the invasion of one's homeland. St. Augustine established the Church's "Just War" doctrine, which has four conditions that must be met for war to be permissible: (1) the damage inflicted by the aggressor is lasting, grave, and certain; (2) all other means of avoiding or ending the conflict are impractical or ineffective; (3) there is a likelihood of success; and (4) the use of force must not be disproportionate or produce evils graver than the evil to be eliminated.

In fighting a just war, a government has the right and duty to enlist citizens in defense of the nation; however, special provisions should be made for conscientious objectors so they can serve outside the military. Even when a just war is underway, the moral law still applies. Accordingly, civilians, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be treated humanely. Obviously, exterminating people through ethnic cleansing and acts of terrorism are grave moral evils.

The Fifth Commandment focuses on the preservation of all life, including our moral lives. Scandal is committed when one's words or actions lead others to believe that something sinful is actually moral or acceptable. Scandal is a grave sin. Laws and institutions that legitimize sinful actions also cause scandal.



*Reflect: By my words or actions do I give scandal to those I live and work with? Am I aware that my behaviors represent the Catholic faith to the world?*

## 91. The Sixth Commandment – Part I (CCC 2331-2400)

The Sixth Commandment is: **“You shall not commit adultery.”** Ex. 20:14.

Marriage is a sacrament created by God to reflect His fidelity to us. God calls married couples to be permanently and exclusively, emotionally and conjugally faithful to each other. The Sixth Commandment protects the integrity of marriage and family life. In service of this goal – and to the surprise of many Catholics – the Sixth Commandment addresses every aspect of human sexuality and every sin against it. This is because God wills that family life be a source of supreme love and joy. Consequently, God forbids everything that harms or detracts from His purpose for marriage and the marital act.

From the outset, let us keep in mind that the Sixth is one Commandment among ten. All of the Commandments are important. All must be followed because God orders us to do so. They all help us live in Christ. We can sin by transgressing any one of them. The depth of treatment that follows is not meant to imply that the Sixth has paramount importance among the Commandments. Rather, the depth is necessary because of the topic’s complexity and controversy. The depth is proportional to the intensity of opposition to the Sixth compared to the other nine Commandments.

Sexual sin can be a very daunting topic because just about everything the world teaches contradicts what Christ and His Church teach. Catholic teachings are not meant to condemn the repentant sinner who falls short of the requirements of the Sixth Commandment. Rather, they are meant to condemn the sins because they separate us from God and lead to misery. They also remind us that God continually calls us to repent and have a true conversion of heart. This call involves sacrificing our own wills to God’s will and opening ourselves to His grace because that is the only path to salvation. But God knows we will all fall short as we walk this path. The point is not to stay on the ground and wallow in the muck of a sinful world. The point is – like the Prodigal Son – to

recognize our failures, to have true sorrow for having offended God, and to rush home to the forgiveness and fulfillment that only exists in Christ and His Church.

Do not lose heart!

*Reflect: "God wishes us to be meek even toward ourselves. When a person commits a fault, God certainly wishes him to humble himself, to be sorry for his sin, and to purpose never to fall into it again; but he does not wish him to be indignant with himself, and give way to trouble and agitation of mind; for, while the soul is agitated, a man is incapable of doing good." - St. Alphonsus Liguori.*

## 92. The Sixth Commandment – Part II (CCC 2331-2400)

God creates each man and woman in His image and likeness. He makes humans as males and females who are equal in dignity but have distinct sexual identities. Each person is a combined body and soul, whose purpose is to know, love, and serve God and thereby grow in holiness so that we may live, body and soul, with God for eternity. Because everything God creates is good, Catholics know that our bodies and sexuality are inherently good when used in accordance with God's plan. There is no question that human sexuality profoundly affects the entire person, especially our capacities to love, procreate, and form bonds with others (what the Church calls "affectivity"). Every man and woman should acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity. The physical, moral, and spiritual differences as well as the complementarity of men and women are all oriented toward the goods of marriage and family.

To keep the Sixth Commandment, we must acquire and practice the moral virtue of chastity, which is part of the virtue of temperance. Jesus provides us with the model of this virtue. Chastity is a grace – a gift from God – and the fruit of spiritual effort. It moderates sexual desire in accordance with right reason and God's will. It is achieved through the successful physical and spiritual integration and control of sexuality within a person. It requires self-mastery and self-discipline. Rather than restraining us, chastity leads us to an internal freedom that allows us to control our sexual desires and act according to God's plan for the appropriate expression of love within sacramental marriage. A just society fosters chastity. Acquiring chastity can be very hard, and we must work continually to achieve it. The effort can be especially intense in certain periods of life, most especially during adolescence. God knows this and lovingly calls us to keep trying, repenting when we fall short, and receiving His absolution in the sacrament of reconciliation.

*Reflect: “If you yearn inordinately for the good things of this life, you will lose those which are heavenly and eternal. Use temporal things properly, but always desire what is eternal. Temporal things can never fully satisfy you, for you were not created to enjoy them alone . . . for your blessedness and happiness lie only in God, who has made all things from nothing.” —Thomas a’ Kempis, from Imitation of Christ.*

### 93. The Sixth Commandment – Part III (CCC 2331-2400)

There are several acts that are sins because they harm chastity. To truly understand why these actions are sinful, it is important to remember that our Catholic beliefs, including those about sexuality, are based on God’s revealed Word in Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, reason, and the realities of the created world. One can come to understand the beauty, goodness, and truth of these beliefs if one remembers these foundational principles, covered earlier in our exploration of the *Catechism*.

(1) All created things have ends or purposes, which are ordered and willed by God. Using anything contrary to, or inconsistently with, its ends is disordered. The Church refers to the misuse of a thing as “disordered” because the thing is not being used for the ends or purposes for which God ordered it. Disordered actions are harmful and sinful.

(2) God has ordained that each marital act has the inseparable purpose of creating new life (the procreative purpose) and uniting and strengthening the marital bond (the unitive purpose). The marital act brings joy and pleasure to spouses, which is a gift from God. Each marital act must be a total giving of oneself. Every rightly ordered marital act has “integrity,” which always requires both openness to new life and marital love; therefore, it is only proper within sacramental marriage.

(3) God created each person as a combined body and soul. Each person has an “integrity” of body and soul, which our actions should express and respect.

(4) Men and women have physical, moral, and spiritual differences as well as complementarity; these are ordered toward promoting the love and joy of marriage and family life.

(5) Marriage is a sacrament created by God, which creates a faithful, permanent, and exclusive union lovingly directed toward having and nurturing children.

*Reflect: An honest reflection on the created world, including all disciplines of biological and medical science, reveals the truth of Catholic teachings.*

#### 94. The Sixth Commandment – Part IV (CCC 2331-2400)

The first sin against the Sixth Commandment is lust. Lust is a disordered desire for sexual pleasure as an end itself. Lust violates the integrity of the person because it objectifies and degrades the body and disregards the person's soul. It turns others into objects and instruments of self-gratification. Lust violates the integrity of the marital act because it disregards its procreative and unitive purposes. Lust may also be adulterous when a married person is indulging it, or the object of lust is a married person. The remedy for lust is the mental self-discipline that comes from chastity.

Masturbation is a sin because it is a disordered use of the gift of sexuality. It is inherently selfish and self-centered. It violates the body by using it contrary to God's design and purpose. It disregards the integrity of the marital act because it isolates sexual pleasure from its procreative and unitive purposes. This is especially a problem for adolescents. Fortunately, confessors, spiritual directors, and counselors can help young people understand and overcome this behavior. The mental self-discipline that comes from chastity can also help.

Pornography is a sin because it violates the integrity of the person – both the viewer and the participant – who are dehumanized, degraded, and commodified into objects of lust. It obviously violates the integrity of the marital act, which is properly exclusive to spouses. Moreover, it often involves acts of sexual abuse and leads the viewers and participants into acts of abuse. Pornography has especially led to the abuse, exploitation, and social diminishment of women. When viewed by married people, it is also an act of adultery because it is a selfish betrayal of one's spouse through emotional infidelity.

***Reflect: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will know them." Matt. 7:15-20.***



## 95. The Sixth Commandment – Part V (CCC 2331-2400)

Fornication, which refers to two unmarried persons engaging in the marital act, is a sin. It is sinful because it violates the dignity and integrity of the person and of marriage because it separates sex from the love and commitment of the marital bond. It also violates the procreative and unitive purposes of the marital act, which are only truly possible within sacramental marriage. Fornication is also a temptation to other evils. For example, it often results in pregnancy, which invites the evil of abortion. It also results in the transmission of a variety of harmful diseases as evidenced by the fact that 20% of Americans now suffer from such diseases. Significant, but often ignored, is the inherently adulterous nature of fornication. In engaging in the marital act with someone who is not your spouse, you create a memory and a point of comparison that will inevitably damage your relationship with your future spouse. Because cohabitation before marriage facilitates fornication and damages the marital relationship, the Church prohibits it. Interestingly, studies consistently show that people who cohabit and fornicate before marriage are significantly more likely to get divorced.

Sexual abuse, rape, and incest are obviously sinful. Acts of sexual violence egregiously violate the integrity of the person and the marital act. Incest, which is always a coercive act of sexual abuse, also violates the integrity of the family.

Prostitution and human trafficking are sins. They violate the integrity of the person, reducing them to a commercial instrument to be used for sexual pleasure and discarded. Prostitutes are also regularly sexually and physically abused. Often, they are effectively slaves. Self-evidently, such commercial acts of fornication also violate the integrity of the people involved and the marital act.

***Reflect: There are some people who advocate for the legalization of prostitution in the name of women's rights. Can a Catholic advocate for such a change in the law?***

## 96. The Sixth Commandment – Part VI (CCC 2331-2400)

Homosexual acts are sinful because they are contrary to the natural law and “intrinsically disordered.” The ways such acts use human sexuality are not ordered toward the purposes ordained by God for human sexuality and the marital act. Such acts cannot possibly ever be procreative. Further, they violate the integrity of the human body and the purpose of its parts. They do not express genuine affectivity and controvert sexual complementarity. The prohibition against homosexual acts is deeply rooted in Scripture and Tradition, just like the condemnations of all the other sexual sins discussed so far.<sup>1</sup>

It is critical to note that, while homosexual inclinations are disordered, merely having such inclinations is not a sin. It is homosexual *acts* that are sinful. The Church compassionately recognizes that there are many people who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies. It further recognizes that these tendencies represent an intense personal trial for most of them. While no one knows the psychological origin of such tendencies, people who have them must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. We must not discriminate against them for having such tendencies. Catholics with homosexual tendencies are called to follow God’s will and sacrificially carry this cross as they continue to participate in the life of the Church. Of course, we are all sinners who must bear our own unique crosses each day.

Contrary to what you might hear from time to time from purportedly Catholic individuals (including some priests) and social media outlets, these are the unchanging teachings of Christ and His Church regarding homosexual acts. These teachings are especially unpopular in our modern society where the very loudest and most politically and economically powerful people in society denounce them and place human desires above God’s will. Nonetheless, we should be confident in

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<sup>1</sup> Because there currently appears to be more controversy regarding the sinfulness of homosexual acts compared to the other equally sinful heterosexual acts discussed earlier, the following citations are provided for clarity on the scriptural condemnations of homosexual acts. *See, e.g.*, Gen. 19:1-29; Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; Wis. 14:26; Ezk. 16:49-50; Rom. 1:24-27 and 32; 1 Cor.:9-1; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; Jude 1:7.

the truths God has given us. We should also remember that anyone – most especially someone claiming to represent the Church – who undermines these teachings or teaches others to disregard them is giving voice to heretical ideas and causing grave scandal.

*Reflect: Remember God never ceases to love us. But when we commit mortal sin, like the Prodigal Son, we can only return to the Father through a conversion of heart, true contrition, absolution, and Communion. To suggest that we have no need for conversion or contrition is to attempt to rewrite Scripture so that the loving and forgiving father joins — and thereby encourages — his prodigal son in his life of sin.*

## 97. The Sixth Commandment – Part VII (CCC 2331-2400)

The use of contraception, often called artificial birth control; intentional sterilization; and efforts to achieve pregnancy outside of the marital act are sinful. Why? Recall, that the inseparable purposes of the marital act are procreative and unitive. Because artificial birth control attempts to render procreation impossible and sterilization definitively does render it impossible, both thwart the purpose of the marital act. In using artificial birth control, spouses deliberately withhold part of themselves from each other and thereby defy God's plan that the marital act be an act of total self-giving.

Attempts to achieve pregnancy through *in vitro* fertilization or the use of surrogates, separate conception from the marital act itself. Therefore, both are contrary to God's will. The Church is compassionate toward couples who suffer the cross of infertility. But remember having a child is a gift from God, not an entitlement or something we are owed by God. The Church strongly supports efforts by such couples to adopt and foster children.

Large families are truly a blessing from God. That said, married couples may permissibly use natural family planning (NFP) methods, which use periodic continence (refraining from the marital act) to plan pregnancies. They may do so for serious reasons such as spacing out births to ensure proper care and support for their children. In contrast to artificial birth control, NFP does not break the inseparable bond between the procreative and unitive purposes of the marital act because each act remains open to pregnancy.

***Reflect: "For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:18-20.***

## 98. The Sixth Commandment – Part VIII (CCC 2331-2400)

There are numerous sinful acts that threaten the purpose and dignity of marriage. Adultery is gravely sinful because it violates the promises of faithfulness and exclusivity that are inherent in the marital bond. Adultery is also a selfish betrayal that inflicts a grave injustice on the wounded spouse and any children in the family. Adultery seriously undermines the institution of marriage and the institution of the family, which gravely destabilizes the social order.

Divorce is contrary to Jesus' clear teaching that marriage is permanent and divorce is prohibited.<sup>2</sup> No human authority can dissolve a proper sacramental marriage. As discussed earlier, the Church can annul an improper Catholic marriage, such as where consent was invalid. Once the Church issues a Declaration of Nullity, the marriage never occurred in the eyes of the Church.

A married couple may physically separate in certain serious cases, such as when adultery or abuse is occurring. Civil divorce is permitted in grave circumstances such as when it is the only possible way to ensure certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of an inheritance. In such cases divorce is not a sin and a divorced Catholic, so long as they do not remarry, can still receive the sacraments. If they do remarry (which would have to occur outside the Church absent an annulment), they are living in a state of public adultery and cannot participate in the sacraments.

As discussed earlier, cohabitation inevitably leads to the sin of fornication and undermines marriage; hence it is sinful. Polygamy is sinful because it violates the equal dignity of spouses and the exclusivity of the marital bond. Finally, same sex unions clearly violate God's law that marriage is between a man and a woman and directed toward procreation; they also involve sinful homosexual acts. Consequently, Catholics may not endorse or participate in such unions.

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<sup>2</sup> Oddly, many Catholics and most Protestant denominations seem to think the prohibition of divorce is a harsh invention of the Catholic Church. But the prohibition is a direct command from Jesus. *See* Mt 5:31-32, 9:3-9; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11.

*Reflect: Before rejecting the Church's teachings, let's look at the fruits of the sexual permissiveness prevalent in the world. There have been over 63 million abortions in the U.S. since 1973;<sup>3</sup> one in five Americans is currently living with an STD;<sup>4</sup> around 41% of marriages end in divorce each year;<sup>5</sup> and more than 40% of children are born out of wedlock, leaving tens of millions of children living without one of their parents (usually the father),<sup>6</sup> which leads to personal and societal suffering, including increased poverty, higher crime rates, higher school dropout rates, higher incidence of drug use, increased risk of teen pregnancy, and a variety of mental illnesses.<sup>7</sup> People are more miserable than ever. How do we know? In 2021 (the most recent year with data available), nearly 180,000 Americans lost their lives due to murder,<sup>8</sup> suicide,<sup>9</sup> or fatal drug overdoses.<sup>10</sup> That is more than three times the number of Americans who died in the Vietnam War. The Church's teachings may be hard but can anything else produce true freedom and happiness?*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nrlc.org/uploads/factsheets/FS01AbortionintheUS.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/fact-sheets/std/STI-Incidence-Prevalence-Cost-Factsheet.html>; the rates are even higher among people who engage in homosexual acts, see, e.g., <https://catholiceducation.org/resources/the-health-risks-of-gay-sex>; <https://www.contagionlive.com/view/incidence-of-stis-stabilized-among-gay-and-bisexual-men-using-hiv-prep>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://financesonline.com/divorce-statistics/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/276025/us-percentage-of-births-to-unmarried-women/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://fathers.com/the-consequences-of-fatherlessness/>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/homicide.htm> (26,031 people murdered).

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs\\_press\\_releases/2022/20220930.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2022/20220930.htm) (47,646 people took their own life).

<sup>10</sup> <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates> (106,699 people died from fatal overdoses).

## 99. The Seventh Commandment – Part I (CCC 2401-2463)

The Seventh Commandment is: **“You shall not steal.”** Ex. 20:15.

The Seventh Commandment governs our relationship to material goods. It forbids unjustly taking or keeping our neighbor’s goods. It recognizes that the goods of creation belong to the whole human race and commands that we act with justice and charity in using earthly goods and the fruits of human labor. It acknowledges the right to private property, but also teaches that this is not an unlimited right. And it demands that we use our possessions in accordance with God’s will and with love toward our neighbors.

God entrusted the world and all its resources to all of humanity to care for, work with, and enjoy. Consequently, the goods that we create and possess in this world ultimately are for the benefit of everyone (Universal Destination of Goods). Individuals have the right to own private property as a means of guaranteeing their freedom and security and to help meet their needs and the needs of those for whom they care. But that right does not do away with God’s original gift of the earth to everyone, so we must always use our private possessions for the benefit of our family and neighbors and to do God’s will. We should also exercise moderation in our attachment to material things, be just and respectful toward our neighbors, and live in solidarity with everyone.

The Seventh Commandment forbids taking someone’s property against the owner’s reasonable will. While it is not theft to take something due to an urgent or grave need, it is theft to deliberately keep something loaned or to retain an object lost by someone else. It is sinful to cheat in business, pay unjust wages, manipulate prices, engage in bribery or corruption, do work poorly, evade taxes, forge checks, waste resources, or damage private or public property. We must keep our promises, honor our contracts, safeguard property rights, pay our debts, and fulfill all obligations freely undertaken. We must make reparation for any violation of these commands, including returning anything stolen or compensating the owner for his or her loss.

*Reflect: Do I accept that everything belongs to God?*



## 100. The Seventh Commandment – Part II (CCC 2401-2463)

Under the Seventh Commandment, it is a grave sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to enslave, traffic, or otherwise treat a human being as property.

Gambling is not a sin so long as it does not deprive a person of what he needs to provide for himself and his family. But gambling addictions, unfair wagers, and cheating are grave matters.

We must respect the integrity of the created world and recognize that everything in it is destined for the common good of humanity, now and in the future. Animals are God's creatures, which He entrusted to our care. We should treat them kindly. It is wrong to make animals suffer or die needlessly. We can use animals for food, clothing, work, and as pets. We may conduct experimentation on animals if it is reasonable and contributes to human health. We should not spend excessively on animals. And we can love animals but should not treat them with the affection that only people deserve.

Founded in part on the Seventh Commandment, the Church's social doctrine makes moral judgments about economic and social matters to protect fundamental human rights and promote our salvation. It is based upon reason, Scripture, and Tradition. Through its doctrine, the Church works to inspire virtuous attitudes regarding earthly goods and economic relationships. It teaches that any system that (1) reduces social relationships to purely economic factors; (2) makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of all economic activity; (3) subordinates individual rights to the collective organization of production; or (4) reduces people to a means for making profit is immoral. The Church rejects socialism, communism, consumerism, materialism, and the excesses of capitalism that seek to place the needs of the free market over the rights and needs of people.

The Church supports reasonable economic regulation. Economic activity must be conducted morally and justly. Its true purpose is to serve humanity by providing for our individual and communal needs. It is not meant solely to increase profit, power, or the production of goods.

*Reflect: Do I place too much value on material things?*

### 101. The Seventh Commandment – Part III (CCC 2401-2463)

The Church's social doctrine declares that work is a sacred duty, which has redemptive power. By enduring work's hardships and uniting our efforts with Jesus, we can participate in His redemptive work. Work thus becomes a means of sanctification and brings the spirit of Christ to everyday life. By working, we fulfill our God-given potential. Everyone should have the equal opportunity to work and make legitimate use of his or her abilities. It is immoral for employers to discriminate based upon sex, race, ethnicity, or disability. Employers should compensate employees sufficiently to allow them to support themselves and their families. While everyone who works should observe their employers' rules, there is sometimes legitimate conflict between employers and employees. We should work to reduce such conflicts through mutually respectful negotiation. When negotiation fails, strikes can be morally legitimate, at least when necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit; however, workers may never resort to violence or strike for reasons not related to working conditions.

Governments should guarantee individual freedom, private property, a stable currency, efficient public services, and physical security. But primary responsibility for economic activity belongs with private individuals and associations. Business leaders should be good fiscal and environmental stewards. While they can work to increase profits, they must also prioritize the safety and welfare of their employees and communities.

On the international level, each nation should strive to operate in solidarity with all others. More prosperous nations have a grave moral responsibility to aid the development and mitigate the suffering of poor nations and nations that have suffered natural disasters.

An increased devotion to God is necessary to the full development of a society. Lay Catholics must take the lead in the political and economic structuring of their nations in accordance with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.

Following the example of Jesus, it is the constant tradition of the Church as well as the moral duty of all Catholics to love and serve the poor and generously share our wealth with them. Excessive love of riches and selfishness are incompatible with our responsibility to love the poor. We serve the poor by practicing the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

*Reflect: The Spiritual Works of Mercy command us to admonish the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead. The Corporal Works of Mercy command us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, and bury the dead. Which one can you do today?*

## 102. The Eighth Commandment – Part I (CCC 2464-2513)

The Eighth Commandment is: **“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”** Ex. 20:16.

The Eighth Commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth to others. God is truth and wills that we live and speak truthfully. God manifested His whole truth in Jesus Christ. Christ calls us to follow and imitate Him. When we refuse to follow God’s will and fail to commit ourselves to the truth, we sin against Him. We also act contrary to our nature, which is naturally attracted to the truth, especially religious truth. The beauty of truth leads us to live good, moral lives that are spiritually joyful.

In justice, we owe the truth to one another. Being truthful means being honest but also discrete, meaning we know how to differentiate between what we should say and what we should keep secret. We have the obligation to bear courageous witness to the truth of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. We do this by taking part in the life of the Church and clearly demonstrating our faith through words and actions. Such witness is an act of justice because it makes the truth known to others. The most supreme witness one can give is to accept martyrdom in order to uphold the truth of our faith.

Lying is the most obvious sin against truth. To lie is to speak or act with an intent to deceive a person who has the right to know the truth. A lie injures our relationship with God, the truth, and our neighbor. Jesus condemns lying as the work of the Devil, in whom there is no truth. The seriousness of a lie depends upon the truth it offends, the circumstances, the liar’s intentions, and the harm suffered by others. A lie is a grave sin when it does grave injury to the virtues of justice and charity or entails the risk of deadly consequences. Lying is destructive to society because it undermines trust and tears the fabric of our relationships.

*Reflect: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they will see God." Matt. 5:8. "Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its Creator." Col. 3:9-10.*

### 103. The Eighth Commandment – Part II (CCC 2464-2513)

Lying in a public proceeding or court is called false witness or perjury. The only difference between them is that perjury is a lie told under oath. These sins can cause miscarriages of justice, which gravely compromise the fairness of the legal system.

There are several sins that cause unjust injury to the reputation of our neighbor. We engage in rash judgment when we assume the truth of someone's alleged moral fault without a sufficient basis to do so. To counter this, we should always give everyone the benefit of the doubt. We engage in detraction when we disclose one person's faults and failings to someone who did not know them for no objectively valid reason. Most gossip includes detraction. To counter this, we should always ask ourselves, "Am I sharing this piece of information merely to tear someone down?" Finally, we engage in calumny when we deliberately lie about someone with the intent of harming his or her reputation. When we engage in calumny, we are motivated by envy and hate, which we must counter with love and humility.

Engaging in flattery, adulation, or complaisance (tending to comply with the wishes of others) are offenses against truth when they encourage or approve of someone's malicious acts or bad conduct; when that person's acts are sinful, our encouragement of them is a grave sin. Boasting or bragging are generally deceptive and thus wrong. Also, sarcasm that is aimed at disparaging someone by caricaturing some aspect of his or her behavior also offends truth.

In giving information, love of neighbor must always guide us. In certain situations, we must judge whether it is appropriate to reveal the truth to a person who asks for it. Not everyone is entitled to the truth. The classic example would be a killer who is searching for his intended victim and asks us where the victim is hiding. The killer, because he intends to do evil, has no right to the truth. Consequently, the moral act would be not to answer him. On other occasions, we should be

discrete and not say things, which, even though they are truthful, disrespect a person's privacy or might cause scandal.

*Reflect: "If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."  
John 15:10-12.*



#### 104. The Eighth Commandment – Part III (CCC 2464-2513)

A priest must keep secret everything we say to him in confession. This is an absolute command. Indeed, it is a crime under Church law for a priest to betray through words or actions anything a person said during confession. Lawyers, doctors, and government officials who receive confidential information are similarly bound by moral and civil law and professional regulations not to disclose such information, except they, unlike a priest, may disclose such information to prevent a grave harm.

As should be obvious, the Eighth Commandment applies whether we communicate in person or via electronic or other media. Given the absence of human contact, we all must exercise special caution communicating online or through our phones. We also must be cautious not to indiscriminately accept everything we read or hear on the internet.

Governments have an obligation to protect truthful communication and to punish offenses against it, such as fraud or defamation. For this reason, totalitarian systems that systematically lie, exercise political control over opinion through the media, manipulate judicial processes, and repress truth by force or intimidation are immoral. Journalists have an obligation to always serve the truth and to follow the other commands of the Eighth Commandment.

Any time we sin against truth, we must make reparation to anyone we have injured.

Always being truthful keeps us from breaking the Eighth Commandment. But we also can and should celebrate God's truth by creating beautiful art. Like any other human activity, art is not an absolute end in itself. Rather, it should serve our ultimate end or purpose, which is to know, love, and serve God so that we may be with Him for eternity in heaven.

Sacred art is true and beautiful when it faithfully evokes and glorifies the transcendent truth, goodness, beauty, and mystery of God. Genuine sacred art draws us to adoration, prayer, and love of God. For this reason, bishops should promote sacred art, old and new, in all its forms. They

should also remove from the liturgy and from places of worship everything that is not in conformity with the truth of faith and the authentic beauty of sacred art.

*Reflect: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you." Phil. 4:8-9.*

## 105. The Ninth Commandment (CCC 2514-2533)

The Ninth Commandment is “**You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.**” Deut. 5:21; Ex. 20:17.

The Ninth Commandment forbids all disordered desires for sensual pleasure that overcome our reason and moral faculties (carnal concupiscence). It supports the Sixth Commandment by forbidding us from indulging thoughts and desires about actions forbidden by the Sixth Commandment.

Because we are a composite of body and soul, there is a certain tension between our spirits and our flesh. This struggle is a lingering effect of Original Sin. It does not mean the flesh is bad, just that it must be controlled. To prevail in our struggle against carnal concupiscence requires purifying one’s heart, which is the center of our moral personality, and practicing temperance, which is the virtue that moderates our desire for pleasure. Being pure in heart requires disciplining ourselves to be charitable, chaste, and lovers of truth and our complete Catholic faith. Through God’s grace we can overcome disordered sensual desires through (1) the virtue and gift of chastity; (2) purity of intention, which means constantly seeking to do God’s will; (3) purity of vision, external and internal, which means disciplining our feelings, imaginations, and thoughts; and (4) prayer.

Purity requires modesty. Modesty is part of chastity. It respects humans, body and soul. Modesty is decency. In practicing modesty, we respect and protect our intimate centers by not revealing in words or dress what should remain hidden. We do not look or behave lustfully toward others because it degrades them. Modesty avoids unnecessary stimulation of sensual desire, protects from seduction and abuse, preserves the mystery of persons and their love, guards one’s privacy, inspires appropriate clothing choices, and maintains decorum in the presence of unhealthy attention from the opposite sex. Modesty condemns attempts to sexualize everything, avoids entertainment that is inconsistent with our Catholic values, and rejects moral permissiveness, which pervades our

world but utterly fails to understand that true freedom is doing what we should, not anything we want.

***Reflect: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matt. 5:27-28.***

## 106. The Tenth Commandment (CCC 2534-2557)

The Tenth Commandment is **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house...or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”** Ex. 20:17.

The Tenth Commandment forbids coveting someone else’s things. It condemns greed, materialism, and envy. It supports the Fifth and Seventh Commandments by forbidding us from indulging our desires for someone else’s property, which could lead to theft, fraud, or violent acts, which those Commandments forbid. It also reinforces the first three commandments by reminding us that God, and not money or power, must be the center of our lives.

The Tenth Commandment condemns greed and the desire to amass earthly power and riches without limit. It also forbids us from acting unjustly toward our neighbor and his or her property. It urges us to banish our desires for material things that do not belong to us. It likewise condemns envy as a capital sin. Envy is sorrow or anger felt because of another person’s possessions, achievements, or qualities.<sup>11</sup> St. Augustine described envy as “the diabolical sin” that causes “hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity.” Envy can lead to the worst crimes.

Jesus calls us to prefer Him to everything and everyone. He commands us to detach ourselves from worldly things – especially the desires for power, wealth, pleasure, fame – for His sake and the sake of the Gospel. As humans, our greatest desire is to see God. Therefore, we must be poor in spirit, which means embracing humility, seeking God’s kingdom, and abandoning ourselves to His providence. In doing so, we prepare ourselves for eternity and free ourselves from worldly anxieties.

***Reflect: Do you ever feel envy toward someone? Try stopping your thoughts and immediately saying a prayer for that person.***

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<sup>11</sup> Envy is sadness or anger about what someone else possesses; jealousy is fear of losing what one already possesses.

## 107. Prayer in the Christian Life – Part I (CCC 2558-2758)

We now come to the final part of the *Catechism*. We have learned what we believe through our examination of the Creed, how we celebrate our Faith through the sacraments, and how we live it by doing God's will, expressed in the Ten Commandments. Everything we have studied thus far comes together in prayer.

In prayer, we raise our minds and hearts to God and ask Him for good things, if it is His will. Prayer is a gift from God, who ceaselessly draws us to Him, as well as an expression of our desire for a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Prayer has developed throughout all of salvation history, from Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets to its culmination in Jesus Christ. Abraham walked in the presence of God, listened to Him, and obeyed Him. His prayer was a battle of faith because he continued to have faith in God even in times of trial. He dared to ask God to spare the few good people in the sinful and depraved city of Sodom. He demonstrated supreme obedience in his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Moses taught us to speak intimately with God, "face to face, like a man with his friend," Ex. 33:11, and to seek God's intercession for others. David, a shepherd who became King, showed us how to pray for all people in a spirit of love and trust. The prophets relied on prayer to strengthen them. Prayer enabled them to oppose injustice and urge the people toward a conversion of heart. In the Psalms, the Word of God became the prayer of humans. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are the pinnacle of prayer in the Old Testament. They are simultaneously personal and communal. They recall the promises that God has fulfilled while also looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. Christ prayed the Psalms and brought them to fulfillment. They are so essential that we still pray them during every liturgy.

***Reflect: Did you know that the Responsorial Psalm used in Mass always responds to, or reflects upon, the first reading?***

108. Prayer in the Christian Life – Part II (CCC 2558-2758)

In the New Testament, Jesus establishes the perfect model of prayer. We see Jesus continually praying, both in public and when He is alone. He is in constant communion with His Father. He is absolutely confident that His prayer is heard. He is lovingly obedient to the will of the Father through His Passion, death on the Cross, and glorious Resurrection. Jesus brings to completion the Father's loving plan, taking upon Himself all of humanity's sin and anguish and accepting all the prayers that had been prayed throughout salvation history. He presented humanity's prayers to His Father who accepted them and answered them beyond all hope by raising Jesus from the dead.

Jesus teaches His disciples to pray with pure hearts, perseverance, forgiveness, and loving and faithful boldness. He calls them to be on guard against temptation and to present their petitions in His name. He teaches them His prayer, the *Lord's Prayer*. He urges us always to pray with the proper disposition, and to reach beyond what we feel and understand. Our prayers now are effective because they are faithfully united with Jesus' prayers.

Mary, Mother of God, provides another model of prayer. Her prayers are her *fiat* (her "yes" to God) and the *Magnificat*. Both are acts of faith and self-surrender. Mary continually prays to Jesus for our needs.

The Holy Spirit inspires the Church and the faithful in prayer. The Church recognizes five types of prayer: blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. The Eucharist combines all five. In a prayer of blessing and adoration, we exalt God for His goodness to us and ask Him for the graces we need; God also blesses us by giving us what we need. We adore and humbly acknowledge our dependence upon Him. In a prayer of petition, we ask God to forgive us and to provide for our spiritual and physical needs. A prayer of intercession asks God to help

someone else. A prayer of thanksgiving expresses our gratitude to God. And a prayer of praise combines the other forms of prayer and proclaims God's glory simply because He is God.

***Reflect: Do I pray all five types of prayer?***



### 109. Prayer in the Christian Life – Part III (CCC 2558-2758)

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray through the living Tradition of the Church. He calls us to pray at a deeper level of contemplation of God, to engage in spiritual reading, and to seek an understanding of the spiritual realities we experience. The sources of prayer are the Word of God, the Liturgy of the Church, the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love), and the events of our everyday lives.

The Church recognizes various ways of praying that have developed in different historical, social, and cultural circumstances. The Magisterium of the Church has the task of determining whether these ways of praying are faithful to the tradition of the Church. It is the duty of pastors and catechists to explain prayer to the faithful.

Prayer is always related to Jesus Christ, and we must pray in His name to God the Father. The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray only through the humanity of Christ. We should invoke Jesus in every prayer. The Church also loves to pray through Mary to God, above all in the *Hail Mary*, Rosary, and other prayers and songs. Mary shows us that Jesus is the only Way to God.

The saints are also models of prayer. We also ask them to intercede before the Holy Trinity for us and for the whole world. In service to God's plan, the saints intercede on our behalf. Throughout the history of the Church, different types of spirituality – distinct ways of living and praying – have developed around different saints such as St. Francis and St. Ignatius.

Families are the first school of prayer. We should all participate in daily family prayer to set an example for each other, most especially for our children. We can help our prayer lives through catechesis (alone, through spiritual reading, or with others in formal Church programs), prayer groups, retreats, and programs of individualized spiritual direction. We can pray anywhere, but should always participate in the Church's liturgical prayer at Mass as well as in Eucharistic adoration when possible. We can also set up special places for prayer within our homes.

***Reflect: The next time you pray the Hail Mary, try thinking about each of the parts:***

***The Angel Gabriel's greeting: Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee.***

***Elizabeth's greeting: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.***

***Our plea: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.***

***Amen.***

## 110. Prayer in the Christian Life – Part IV (CCC 2558-2758)

We can and should pray constantly. We can pray anytime throughout the day or night. That said, the Church proposes that we maintain certain regular prayer practices such as attending Mass on Sunday and Holy Days, saying prayers each morning and evening, praying before and after meals, saying the Rosary, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

Within Catholic tradition, there are three forms of prayer, each of which is centered in our hearts: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. In vocal prayer, we use words, aloud or mentally. The *Our Father* is a perfect form of vocal prayer. Meditation is a prayerful reflection that begins with the Word of God in the Bible. In meditating, we reflect on the Word of God using rational thought, imagination, emotion, and desire in order to deepen our faith, convert our hearts, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Contemplative prayer is a form of interior prayer in which we surrender our minds and wills to the Holy Spirit and seek to gaze upon God in silence and love. We cannot force ourselves to experience true contemplation. It is a gift from God.

It can be challenging to pray. Indeed, the Church describes it as a spiritual battle. It is important to remember that prayer is a gift of grace to which we must open ourselves. We must then resist our wandering minds, our surroundings, and the temptations of the Devil, which aim to turn us away from prayer. We must also resist erroneous ideas about prayer, such as believing we do not have time for it; that it is useless because we do not always get what we ask for; that it is too hard and too discouraging; or that it is about attempting to empty ourselves in the quest for nothingness, which is an approach common to new age and certain Eastern mystical practices. Humility, trust, and perseverance are necessary to overcome these obstacles. Ultimately, success in prayer helps us to progress in our spiritual lives.

***Reflect: Meditate on Christ's death on the cross. Slowly read Matthew 27:33-56. Place yourself there with Mary and John. See what they see. Hear what they hear. Feel what they feel.***

## 111. Prayer in the Christian Life – Part V (CCC 2558-2758)

Distraction is a very frequent and recurring difficulty in prayer. It takes our attention away from God, but it also reveals those things to which we are too attached. Do I find myself frequently thinking about work tasks or my daily schedule? Try to stop thinking about those things by sorting them out before you start to pray. Clear your mind, turn humbly to God, and ask Him to help you. If distractions still come, offer them up to God and return your focus back to your prayer. It is difficult, but keep at it. God loves when you continue to try.

Prayer is also affected by dryness, which is a feeling of emptiness or a lack of energy or enthusiasm in your prayer life. Often, persisting in prayer in the face of dryness is the only answer. Changing one's prayer routine or one's forms of prayer or doing spiritual reading may sometimes help. Dryness will pass. If we are not vigilant in our spiritual practices (prayer, fasting, and almsgiving/charitable works), we can also fall into acedia, which is a form of spiritual laziness or apathy where we are not keeping our heart turned toward God or where we deliberately refuse to do what God asks of us. Greater discipline joined with the approaches used for overcoming dryness may also help with acedia.

People become discouraged in prayer when they think God is not listening to them. This can be a very human feeling; however, it is not true. God always listens to our prayers. We should ask ourselves whether we are seeking to accept God's will or whether we are viewing Him as simply a means to get what we want. Sometimes, we will discover that our hearts are divided between God's will and our own. We should always remember that when we pray, we receive more than specific gifts from God. We receive the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which transform our heart, the deepest center of our being. With God's help, we can pray constantly. Jesus is always praying in us and with us. He is also praying constantly for us. We must become like children and trust in God.

*Reflect: Read John 17. Jesus' prayer by the Last Supper is the longest prayer found in the Gospels. The Church calls it the priestly prayer of Jesus. It embraces the whole economy of creation and salvation, as well as His death and Resurrection.*

## 112. The *Lord's Prayer* – Part I (CCC 2759-2865)

When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave us the *Lord's Prayer*, the perfect prayer, which He received from His Father. It summarizes the whole Gospel, addresses all our human needs, and is the most perfect, complete prayer. It is the definitive prayer of the Church.

We pray the *Lord's Prayer* not as individuals petitioning for ourselves. Instead, we pray it together with all other Christians. The prayer is more than just words. By praying it, we are actually filled with the Holy Spirit and join with the mission of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is intimately connected to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and, most especially, the Eucharist. It sums up all the intercessions following the Consecration and gives voice to all of our hopes for Heaven that Holy Communion anticipates. It is also an essential part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The *Lord's Prayer* begins: **“Our Father, Who art in Heaven.”**

We begin our prayer with Jesus bringing us before God the Creator and telling us to call Him “Our Father.” By the grace of our Baptisms, Jesus invites before God as adopted sons and daughters. We pray with humility, joy, and a simple, faithful trust that we are God’s adopted children, whom He loves and hears. We declare that we are His people and He is our God, now and forever. We say “our” (rather than “my”) because we pray together as a brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray with and for all people that they may know God, and that we may overcome divisions and unite with one another and with Him. In thinking about God as Father, we must never apply our flawed conceptions of human fatherhood to Him. God “Our Father” transcends human categories. Also, when we pray to Him, we are praying to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We affirm that Our Father is in “Heaven.” Here, heaven refers to a state of being, rather than a place, because God transcends everything. Heaven refers to the majesty and holiness of God as well as His presence in the hearts of the just.

*Reflect: Catholics have said the Lord's Prayer since the time of the Apostles. It was standard practice to say it three times each day, replacing the 18 benedictions prayed by Jewish people.*

### 113. The *Lord's Prayer* – Part II (CCC 2759-2865)

In praying the *Lord's Prayer*, we make seven petitions to God. The first three focus on God because we put our love of Him above everything else. We pray for the sanctification of God's name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the fulfillment of His will in all things. In the last four petitions, we beg God to feed us, physically and spiritually; to forgive us as we forgive others; to help us withstand temptations; and to free us from the Devil.

In the first petition, we pray: **“Hallowed be Thy Name.”**

We acknowledge that the Father is holy, we pray that our faith may animate our lives, and we ask that everyone know and bless the Name of God.

In the second petition, we pray: **“Thy Kingdom come.”**

We pray for the final coming of the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ's glorious return. We also pray that the Kingdom of God will continue to grow until Christ's return through our sanctification, love of neighbor, and commitment to living the Beatitudes.

In the third petition, we pray: **“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

Jesus came to fulfill God's will that we all be saved and know His truth. We ask the Father to unite our wills to Jesus' will so that, through His grace, we will recognize His will and have the strength to do His will. We seek to follow His example as well as the examples of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. We ask that God's will be fulfilled here and now, as it is already fulfilled in heaven.

In the fourth petition, we pray: **“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

We ask the Father to give us all what we need to be nourished each day, both physically and spiritually. We ask for the grace to help feed the poor. Most importantly, because we “do not live on bread alone,” we also ask God to satisfy our spiritual hunger with His Word and His true presence in the Eucharist.

*Reflect: We have prayed the Lord's Prayer so many times that we often say the words quickly and without appreciating their profound meaning. Try to stop this by slowing down and focusing intently on each word you are praying. Think deeply about what you are saying and what you are asking of God.*



#### 114. The *Lord's Prayer* – Part III (CCC 2759-2865)

In the fifth petition of the *Lord's Prayer*, we pray: **“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”**

We acknowledge that we are sinners and ask God to forgive us for our sins. We proclaim God's mercy because, through Jesus and the sacraments, we are redeemed and our sins are forgiven. Most significantly, we recognize and accept that we must first forgive those who have sinned against us in order to have our sins forgiven. We acknowledge the hard truth that mercy cannot penetrate our hearts unless we learn how to forgive everyone, including our enemies. Many times, this seems like an impossible requirement, but, if we offer our hearts to the Holy Spirit, we can, like Jesus, love to the extreme limits of love. We can turn our pain and injuries into compassion and prayer for others. In truly forgiving, we participate in the Father's mercy and reach the highest point of prayer.

In the sixth petition, we pray: **“Lead us not into temptation.”**

We ask God our Father not to leave us alone to face the power of temptation. We know that when we give into temptation, we sin. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us know how to tell the difference between a trial that makes us grow in goodness and a temptation that leads to sin and death. We beg for help resisting temptation. We unite ourselves to Jesus, who overcame temptation with Scripture and prayer. We ask our Father for the grace to be vigilant and the grace of final perseverance (that is, to stay in a state of grace until we die).

In the seventh petition, we pray: **“But deliver us from evil.”**

Make no mistake about it, when we say “evil” we are referring to the Devil, who opposes God and deceives the whole world. Of course, Jesus through His Passion and Resurrection has already defeated the Devil. But we pray that all of humanity will be free of the Devil and all his empty works in this world. We also pray for peace and final perseverance until the second coming of Jesus when He will free us from evil once and for all.

We conclude with **“Amen,”** which means, “so be it.” We thus accept all of the petitions that we have just prayed.

Shortly after praying the *Lord’s Prayer* at Mass, we say the final doxology: “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.” In doing so, we reiterate the first three petitions to our Father, but now we do so in adoration and thanksgiving for their accomplishment in heaven. We proclaim that Christ has taken the three titles of kingship, power, and glory from the Devil and restored them to our Father. And, again, we say, “Amen” – So be it.

*Reflect: Regrettably, too many Catholics incorrectly believe that the Devil is just a medieval superstition that we have dropped in the “modern” Church. But as St. John Paul II reminds us, “[t]his fight against the Devil . . . is still relevant today, because the Devil is still alive and operating in the world.” St. Michael, pray for us!*

**THE END**

