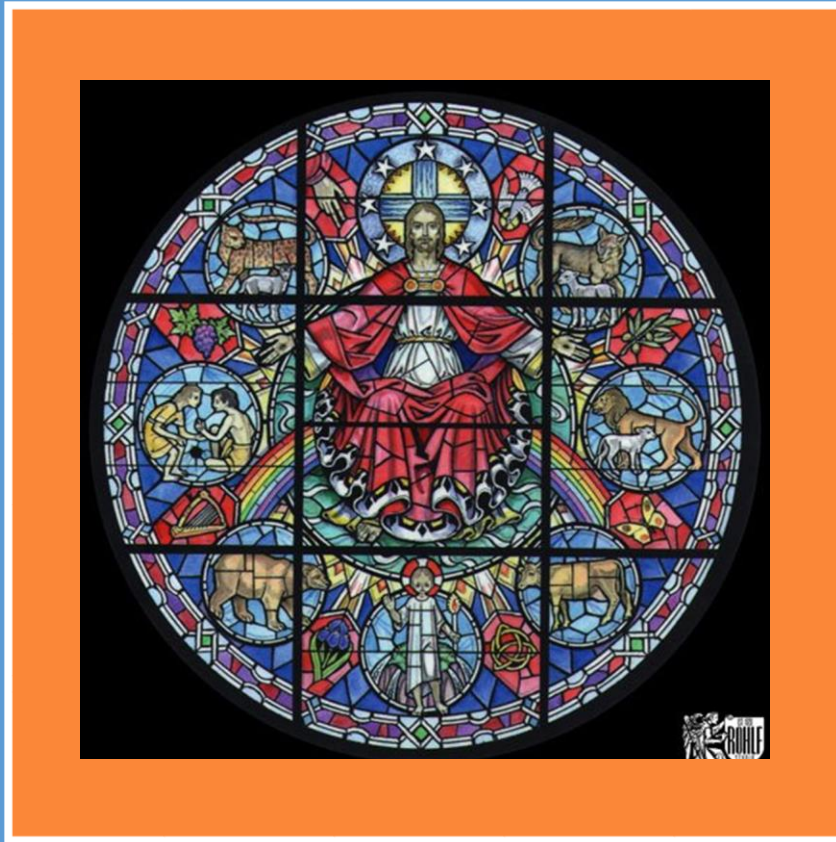


THE CATHOLIC FAITH

BY MSGR. LAWRENCE MORAN & RONALD J. ELDRED



This document is a thorough overview of the four pillars of the Catholic Faith: the Nicene Creed; the Sacraments; the Commandments; and Prayer.

Catholic Apologetics

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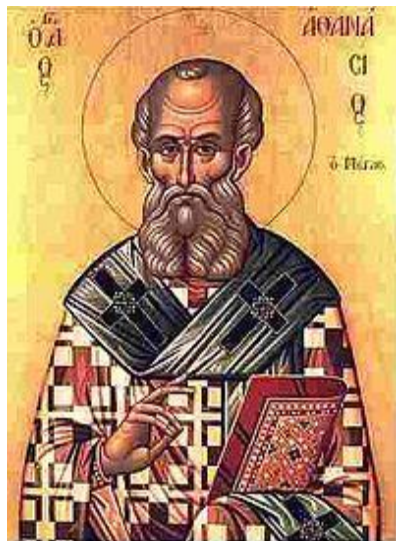
SECTION I. UNDERSTANDING THE NICENE CREED

By Msgr. Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

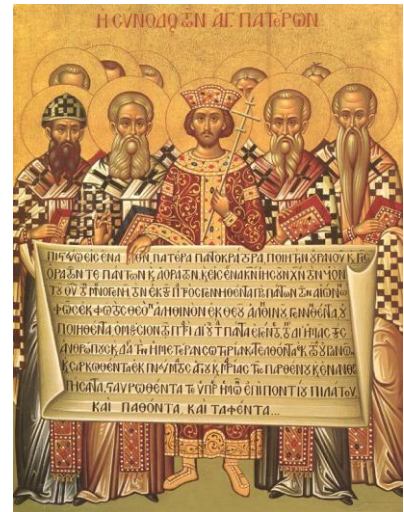
INTRODUCTION

The Nicene Creed is the profession of faith that is most widely used in Christian liturgy. It gets its name from its original form adopted at the first ecumenical council held at the city of Nicaea (which is the city Iznik in modern Turkey) in the year 325. The Creed that Catholics profess on Sunday's is known as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, which was formed at the Council of Nicaea and the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was formulated to clarify issues pertaining to the nature of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God the Father. The councils were called mainly to combat the Arian heresy. Some Protestant churches also have retained the Nicene Creed since the Reformation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says of the Nicene Creed, “Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is 'consubstantial' with the Father, that is, one only God with him. [The English phrases 'of one being' and 'one in being' translate the Greek word *homoousios*, which was rendered in Latin by *consubstantialis*.] The second ecumenical council,



ST. ATHANASIUS WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE NICENE CREED. HE IS ALSO CALLED ATHANASIUS THE GREAT, AND ATHANASIUS THE CONFESSOR. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS CONSIDERED HIM AS A CHURCH FATHER AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH. HE WAS THE TWENTIETH BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT.



THE ICON DEPICTS THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE, WHO CALLED FOR THE COUNCIL TO KEEP PEACE IN HIS EMPIRE, ACCOMPANIED BY THE BISHOPS OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA OF 325 A.D. HOLDING THE NICENO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed 'the only begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father. [Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; cf. DS 150.]” (No. 242).

St. Athanasius (c. 296–298 – 2 May 373), who had gone to the Council of Nicaea with his bishop, Alexander, was the driving force behind the Nicene Creed. He is also called Athanasius the Great, Athanasius the Confessor or, primarily in the Coptic Orthodox Church, Athanasius the Apostolic. The Catholic Church has considered him a Doctor of the Church. He was the twentieth bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, considered one of the most important dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church. His reign lasted 45 years (c. June 8, 328 – May 2, 373), of which over 17 were spent in five exiles ordered by four different Roman emperors. One source has praised him as “a renowned Christian theologian, a Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, and a noted Egyptian leader of the fourth

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century.” The story of his life would make an interesting discussion in itself. The Nicene Creed has been normative for the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Church of the East, the Oriental Orthodox churches, the Anglican Communion, and some Protestant de-nominations.

The Apostles' Creed is older than the Nicene Creed, but is used only in the West, and not the Eastern liturgy. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says of the Apostles Creed that, "The Apostles Creed is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the Apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is 'the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter the first of the Apostles, to which he brought the common faith'" (No. 194). Elsewhere it says "Our presentation of the faith will follow the Apostles Creed, which constitutes, as it were, 'the oldest Roman catechism'. Either the Nicene or the Apostles Creed is recited in the Roman Rite Mass directly after the homily on all Sundays and solemnities. Also, the Nicene Creed is part of the profession of faith required of those undertaking important functions within the Church the Catholic Church. The Nicene Creed is always sung or recited at the Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite immediately preceding the Eucharistic Prayer and is also recited at daily compline, as well as at other services

HISTORY OF THE CREED

A creed is a brief summary of the Faith that provides a doctrinal statement of correct belief, or orthodoxy. The creeds of Christianity were formulated during times of conflict over doctrinal issues. The Nicene Creed was adopted in the face of the Arian heresy. The heresy was named after a Libyan presbyter in Alexandria named Arius, who had declared that although the Son was divine, he was a created being and, therefore, not co-eternal and co-equal with the Father. He declared that “there was when he was not”, which made the son less than the Father. The Arian heresy challenged the doctrine of the Trinity of one God in three divine persons. .

The Nicene Creed of 325 explicitly affirms the co-equality and co-eternality of the Father and the Son. The Son’s divinity was reaffirmed the term “consubstantial”. The Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. added that the Holy Spirit is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. The Athanasian Creed (not used in Eastern Christianity) describes in much greater detail the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed makes no explicit reference to the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, but, most of those who use it believe it is implicit in it. The original Nicene Creed was first adopted in 325 at the First Council of Nicaea. At that time, the text ended after the words “We believe in the Holy Spirit”, after which an anathema was added.

The “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed” received its name from the Second Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 381 that modified the original Nicene Creed. It differs in several respects both adding and elimination words and clauses. The most notable difference is the additional section:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

There has been a lot of debate among scholars over the years whether the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed was simply an expansion of the Creed of the Council of Nicaea, or was based on another traditional creed independent of the one from the Nicene Council. Nonetheless, the Creed as Catholics profess it each Sunday is the same as the combined version as amended at the Council of Constantinople with a few minor changes, such as the “*filioque*”, which says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.” It was accepted by the Catholic Church after 1014 A.D., but rejected by the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Eastern churches stress that the Holy Spirt proceeds through the Son, rather than from the Father and the Son, which implies that the Holy Spirit is less than the Father or the Son. One source states of this matter:

Whether one includes that phrase, and exactly how the phrase is translated and understood, can have important implications for how one understands the central Christian

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doctrine of the Holy Trinity. To some, the phrase implies a serious underestimation of the Father's role in the Trinity; to others, denial of what it expresses implies a serious underestimation of the role of the Son in the Trinity. Over time, the phrase became a symbol of conflict between East and West, although there have been attempts at resolving the conflict.

What is a Creed: The word creed derives from the Latin *Credo*, which means “I Believe.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines creed as “A brief, normative summary statement or profession of Christian faith.” In this context, faith means a summary of the body of truth that we call the Deposit of Faith. Examples are the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Credo of the People of God. The Church proposes the Creed for our belief. This means that when we recite the Creed, we should firmly believe what we say is true. In other words, when we recite the Creed, we are professing that we have faith in the truth of what we are saying. I believe it was St. Teresa of Avila who said we should say the Creed with attention and devotion, meaning to pay attention to what one is saying when they recite the Creed, and mean what you say.

The Nicene Creed is as follows:

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

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

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

I believe

Let's begin our discussion by asking "What is faith?" The simplest definition of faith is that it means to believe something. Faith equals belief. To believe means to have a firm conviction in the reality or truth of something. The *New Catholic Dictionary* defines faith as an assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another." It states:

[Faith is] The acceptance of the word of another, trusting that one knows what the other is saying and is honest in telling the truth. If one says he believes a statement that I have made about something, he is expressing a trust in my knowledge and honesty. The basic motive of all faith is the authority (or right to be believed) of someone who is speaking . . . It is called divine faith when the one believed is God, and human faith when the persons believed are human beings.

It differs from assent in matters of science in that science is based on evidence of fact, whereas faith is based solely on the word of another. Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced. We believe the Creed because the Catholic Church was there to witness the actions and hear the teachings of Jesus Christ, formulated them into doctrines, summarized them in the Creed, and transmitted it down through the ages for our belief. Moreover, the Church was there to witness the events described in the Gospels, wrote them down, and transmitted them over the centuries for our benefit. St Augustine said something to the effect that he couldn't believe what is in the Bible without the testimony of the Catholic Church. We believe what the Creed states, because we accept it on the word of the Church.

To believe means to have a firm conviction in the reality of something, but based on the word of another; a synonym for reality is truth. Believing does not mean that one isn't sure of the truth of something. Countless millions have suffered persecution and even given their lives for what they believed to be true. We have achieved the truth about something when our convictions correspond with reality, what really is true about the matter. Our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen. We believe religious truths on the testimony of others. This is why there exists the virtue of faith, which is from God, but we must cooperate with it. Only in Heaven will our faith be turned into certainty, our hope into fact. Our trust is placed in the Catholic Church. When one comes to believe in the truth of the Catholic Church, everything that the Church proposes for his belief can be believed with a reasonable assurance that it is true. Believing something to be true or real is akin to what we mean by faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* distinguishes between two meanings of faith: faith as a personal matter of belief (*fides qua*), and Faith (usually capitalized) as a set of doctrines to be believed (*fides quae*).

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Faith as a personal matter

Faith as a personal matter according to the *Catechism* “is an intellectual assent to the truths and doctrines of revelation and the basis for spiritual and moral action.” Having faith then is “a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed” (No. 150). Elsewhere the *Catechism* says of faith: “In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine Grace” (No. 155). The meaning of faith in this sense means believing what God has revealed to be true. In line with this reasoning, St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing (what God has revealed) as “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace.” Since divine faith is a theological virtue, it must be infused by God into the soul, but requires an act of the will to command the intellect to accept it.

Faith as a set of doctrines

What God has revealed was formulated by the Catholic Church into doctrines that make up the Deposit of Faith (*fides quae*). The doctrines are found in the Holy Bible and Sacred Tradition as interpreted by the magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These formulated doctrines or teachings are found in the Church’s creeds, liturgies, and catechisms, papal documents, and the documents of Church councils. In this regard, the *Catechism* states:

We do not believe in formulas, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities [which they express]. All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more (No. 170).

In summary, believing is what is called having faith (*fides qua*) in the content of Faith (*fides quae*). Faith as content is the object of faith, which ultimately leads to God, where-as faith as belief is the act of faith. As Peter Kreeft says in his *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics*, “reason can take us a ways up the mountain to Heaven, but faith can take us all the way to the top.”

Knowing contrasted with believing

Knowing and believing are often contrasted to each other; however, they differ in that knowing something (proper knowledge) means one has actually witnessed it himself or has arrived at it by a process of reasoning, whereas believing is attained by accepting the word of others as true. Most of what we believe to be true is accepted on the word of others, such as clergy, parents, teachers, and experts in various fields, because there is very little that we can witness or experience ourselves during our limited and short life-times. Although believing is often used interchange-

ably with having faith in something, it may or may not imply certitude in the believer. On the other hand, faith almost always implies certitude.



Fr. John Hardon tells us in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that “In theology belief is certain or it is not belief.” To believe means to have a firm conviction in the reality of something; a synonym for reality is truth. When we profess the Nicene Creed we say “I believe” because we accept the doctrines contained therein on the word of another, the Catholic Church. In matters related to God, we simply can’t have all of the facts, because much, if not most about God is a mystery. As we have ascertained, believing does not mean that one isn’t sure of the truth of something. Countless millions have suffered persecution and even given their lives for what they believed to be true. We have achieved the truth about something when our convictions correspond with reality, what really is true about the matter. Most of what

guides our lives is a matter of belief, because we cannot see or experience everything. The truth of most things must be accepted on the word of others. The key is that our sources of information must be honest and credible.

Why then do we say that “I believe” the doctrines contained in the Creed rather than “I know” them to be true? Is it because we aren’t sure? Believing something to be true or real is akin to what we mean by faith. I believe means I have faith in something. In fact, the *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines belief as “accepting of something as true on the word of another.” On the other hand, one can properly use the word “knowledge” or to say that he knows something to be true only when he comes to conclusions based on facts and principles that he has personally seen or is based on a chain of reasoning that he has carefully thought through. However, people commonly use the word “knowledge” to mean any-thing they are relatively certain about whether it be obtained from personal observation or based on the testimony of others. In either case, they say they know something to be true. However, if what they say they know to be true is based on the word of others, this is an improper use of the word knowledge and is more akin to what one means when he says he believes something, because it is based on the word of others. On the other hand, an example often used to illustrate this point is when one says he believes the sky to be blue and he is looking at it and it is blue, he is using the word belief improperly; he does not believe in this case, but knows the sky is blue.

Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced. We believe religious truths on the testimony of others. This is why there exists the virtue of faith, which is from God, but we must cooperate with it. Only in Heaven will our faith become fact, our hope realized. Because the events described in the Bible happened long ago, and we didn’t witness them ourselves, we must rely on a credible

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and trustworthy source—the Catholic Church—which witnessed these events, wrote them down in the scriptures for our benefit, and transmitted them to the present. Our trust is placed in the Catholic Church. Once one comes to believe in the truth of the Catholic Church, everything that the Church proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true.

Human Faith

That faith is based solely on the word of others might be hard to understand, but isn't most of what we believe based on the word of others? Fr. John Hardon tells us that we start to believe the moment we are born. He was one of the greatest catechists and apologists for the Catholic Faith of the twentieth century. He explains that belief begins when we come to trust that father and mother will protect us and take care of our needs. Then as we go through life, we trust an increasing number of people to satisfy our needs and provide us with knowledge, such as brothers and sisters and other family members, as well as neighbors, teachers, and the like. If we didn't trust and listen to people, we wouldn't believe anything we hear or read. Life would be impossible. We simply can't experience and verify everything that we learn; we have to trust and accept the word of others. We have to believe that whatever they tell us is true, at least until it is proven otherwise. Fr. Hardon says that:

Who would ever read a book unless he believed in its author? Who would never buy an article of clothing or furniture; who would ever sit down to eat a meal he had not personally prepared; who would go to school, or listen to a teacher? Who would ever marry another person? Who would sign a contract or open a friendship or enter the priesthood or convent? Who would ever listen to another person talk or elect a public official? In a word, what would we do unless we trusted people and their word and believed in their promises? What would we do?

So it appears then that human beings are made to believe. Without trust social life would be impossible and social communication would be irrational. According to Fr. Hardon, the human soul is made to believe and the human heart is made to accept people and their words in trustful confidence. This is so true that once our confidence has been betrayed, our trust broken, we can become socially and mentally crippled. He says, "There are no unbelievers except those who are totally insane. It is part of rational man as a social being to believe. The only difference is in the way people believe or in whom. There is no question of not believing."

Belief is not opinion

Often people equate believing something with opinion. Fr. Hardon tells us that for the ordinary person the word belief is roughly equivalent to opinion. When one says "I believe that the nation's rate of unemployment will rise next year", he means that in his opinion it probably will rise, but

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he is not sure of it. This is not our meaning of belief in theology. In theology belief is certain or it is not belief. As we said earlier, “faith or belief is an assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another,” which produces certitude. Also, as we discussed earlier, this meaning of belief we find even on the human level of discussion. For example, if one says that he or she believes a statement that I have made about something, he or she is expressing a trust in my knowledge and honesty.

According to Fr. Hardon, much of our practical knowledge in life and almost all of our theoretical knowledge are based on human faith. Children take almost everything on the word of their parents, while students absorb almost all they learn from their textbooks and the lectures of their teachers. He tells us that we learn what is going on in our city, country and world almost exclusively from reports in the print and electronic media, all of them informing us through human faith. Passengers believe on the word of others that the jet or train or bus is going to one city instead of a hundred other possible destinations, and shoppers believe on human faith the labels on cans of food. Fr. Hardon says that, “Indeed, it can be said that belief and faith are at the very foundation of human life even on the purely natural level. It cannot be a surprise that they are also the first step of a life lived on the divine level.” As we shall see later, what Fr. Hardon is leading to is Divine faith.

Belief requires commitment that something is true

So it seems that when one says he or she believes something, even on the natural level, he or she is reasonably certain that it is true. Belief involves commitment. Fr. Hardon says that belief is more than a mere intellectual agreement. He gives an example of one in an airport who theoretically accepts the television monitor's announcement that flight so-and-so goes to a certain city, but that one's acceptance is complete when he or she not only agrees intellectually with the information, but also steps into the plane and buckles up. He states that one has then committed his or her safety to another person. Therefore, belief and faith are thoroughly interpersonal matters. Father remarks that “When there is a genuine acceptance of the word of another there is also a trust in that person's integrity and knowledge. The more we know and love another, the more we are inclined to receive his statements and protestations. The better the person, the more he is worthy of our trust.”

Therefore, when one says he or she believes something, he or she is reasonably certain that it is true, that it reflects what really is regarding the matter. As I said earlier, belief produces certitude. Fr. Hardon tells us in this regard that believing something to be true is not equivalent to saying “I think something is true” or “it seems likely that such is the case.” He says that “If an assent is not sure, it is not belief, but a mere private calculation based on what one deems likely or unlikely.” He goes on to say, “Even on the human level, he who doubts does not believe. The person who doubts another's statement somehow questions the speaker's reliability: his knowledge, his memory or his honesty. There is something lacking to a full interpersonal trust.”

Divine Faith

Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith. If what we have been discussing about the certainty of belief on the merely human or natural level—that is human faith—how much more this must be true on the divine level, the level of Divine Faith. If we can say that we can believe others on the natural or human level with certainty—that is at least with reasonable certainty—it is even much truer on the divine and supernatural level, for as Fr. Hardon says “God is the purest knowledge and the purest holiness and the purest integrity. When he speaks we give an unqualified assent and entertain no doubt whatsoever.”

In religion, faith is the acceptance of what God has revealed as witnessed and attested by the Catholic Church and found in the Bible and Tradition. Once one comes to believe in the truth of the Church, everything that she proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true. So believing and having faith are both based on the word of others, but only Divine Faith is absolutely certain, because it is from God who can neither deceive nor be deceived. The authority of human beings depends on their trustworthiness and on their ability to know the truth of something. The *Catechism* states in this regard.

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. So that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit. Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all; they are “motives of credibility (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind (No 156).

The *Catechism* concludes that “Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth” (No 153). Divine Faith is more certain than all human knowledge, because “it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie” (No.157). Fr. Hardon says that Divine Faith is “The infused theological virtue whereby a person is enabled to believe that what God has revealed is true—not because its intrinsic truth is seen with the rational light of reason—but because of the authority of God who reveals it, of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.” Divine Faith is certain; human faith, which also depends on the credibility of the person, is more akin to believing.

In human faith, believing is the acceptance of something as true on a trustworthy person's word. It differs from Divine Faith only in the stress on confidence in the one who is believed. Moreover, Fr. Hardon informs us that belief emphasizes the act of the will, which disposes one to believe, where faith is rather the act of the mind, which assents to what is believed.” The role of the will in

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faith is to give assent to what is presented to it by the intellect. The intellect must determine whether or not something proposed to it is reasonable to believe, that it is something good to believe, but the will must move the intellect to give its assent. The recognition of truth, the goodness of the object, or of the reasonableness of belief incites the will, which brings reason (intellect) to assent. God infuses the theological virtue of faith into the human soul only if the recipient is willing to accept it, for he respects our freedom of the will and does not force anything on us. Having Divine Faith makes one absolutely certain of that which the Church proposes as true. St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing (what God has revealed) as “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace.”

Credible witnesses are in a position to know the truth of the matter

Just as with human or natural matters, our belief in the truth of religious matters must be based on the word of others that we trust, because, for the most part, our conclusions are not based on facts and principles that we have personally seen or experienced. I believe that once one comes to believe in the truth of the Catholic Church, everything that the Church proposes for our belief can be believed with a reasonable, even absolute assurance that it is true, because it witnessed the events described in the Bible, wrote descriptions of them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit. In other words, we believe religious truths on the testimony of another—the other being the Catholic Church.

Where do we find the information needed to understand and defend the Faith? Where can we get this knowledge? Knowledge comes to us either through our senses or by direct infusion by God, what is called inspiration. Most knowledge enters our minds through the senses, meaning our ability to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. One can attain knowledge of the Faith by listening to EWTN radio and television. Or one can study good religion books like the ones we used at John Paul II Catholic High School in the apologetics and other courses. Teenagers can attend a school like John Paul II. Adults can attend courses offered by their parishes or deaneries. One can read the Church Fathers and other good theologians who have explained and defended the Catholic Faith over the centuries. Another invaluable source is the lives of the saints. Although one might be able to learn the main truths revealed by God by his own efforts, in general the usual way is through the Church, which Christ commissioned to teach in his name and with his authority. Of course, the main source of knowledge concerning the Faith is Sacred Scripture and Tradition. And don't forget the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church or other suitable catechisms. Wherever one gets his or her information, study must be done prayerfully to achieve understanding of what he or she has learned. Done in this spirit, the Holy Spirit will inspire one with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Faith.

Why it is difficult to know the truth with certainty

What makes it so difficult for us to know the truth of things with absolute certainty? I could give

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several psychological and sociological reasons, but ultimately it is because of our fallen human nature due to the consequences of Original Sin. Among the consequences of Original Sin are a diminished intellect, a weakened will, an imagination that can run wild, a deficient memory, and the urge to sin—concupiscence—all of which militate against our ability to know God and his truth. This makes it difficult for us to know the truth of religious matters with absolute certainty; however, we can achieve certainty with the infusion of the gift of faith. Our belief can be akin to knowing (proper knowledge), when God himself guarantees it through the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, another reason knowing the truth is difficult to know something is because everything that we know originally existed outside of our intellect, our minds. In order for us to know something, it must somehow get from the outside into our minds. Knowledge of the reality outside of us can get into our minds only by passing through our senses, that is, by perception, or by direct infusion. By the senses we mean our ability to smell, see, hear, touch, and taste. By infusion we mean knowledge that is directly put into our minds by God. For example, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Holy Bible to know the truth of God's Revelation. In prayer God inspires us to understand things that we couldn't otherwise understand. Moreover, God's law, the natural law, is written on our hearts.

How is it possible that we know things that exist outside of our minds with certainty? In order for us to know anything with certainty, what is in our minds must correspond with what is really outside of us, what really exists outside of our minds. Some have argued that we can't know anything with certainty, because everything has to be filtered through the senses, which are imperfect. The blind person perceives differently than persons with sight. Reality for the deaf person is different than for those who can hear. The deaf and blind person even more so. Moreover, to compound the problem, our senses are conditioned by our way of life or culture, our past, our personality, and other factors. What's more, evil spirits can mislead us. And most importantly, our wounded nature militates against our knowing the truth of things about God with absolute certainty. All of these can militate against our knowing the truth with certainty. Nonetheless, with all of these limitations, God created us with the ability to comprehend the outside world, even the past world. All of limitations are all the more reason why we need the Church to guide us to the truth. The Church was established by Jesus Christ and has been here since he walked the earth. Only the Church can verify the truth of what the Bible teaches and the Nicene Creed professes. We can trust with absolute confidence that what she teaches is true. The Church has always taught that we can know the truth of things outside of our minds with a reasonable degree of certainty, even with absolute certainty. The Church should know, because it was there to witness the events described in the Bible, wrote them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit.

Why humans believe in men but not God

St. John asked the question, "How is it that humans are so ready to believe in men, yet are so slow to believe in God?" Fr. Hardon asks "Why is this so true?" He answers "How, indeed! How is it

that gullible man who is so ready to believe in the most bizarre TV statements or in the most atrocious editorials in newspapers; how is it that this same person can suddenly become so skeptical when God speaks and when the message He communicates is His own divine wisdom?" He says that whatever the reason, it's not that man is not inclined to believe. He muses, "Might it not be that what God asks him to believe is so demanding and the cost to man's generosity is so great?"

Then Fr. Hardon goes on to say, "As we look at the shambles of faith in the western world today, we are tempted to exclaim, 'What happened? Why have so many Catholics, so well educated, suddenly stopped believing?'" He answers, "No one but God knows the full answer. But one reason, it seems to me, is that in today's agnostic climate only a realized faith can be trusted to endure." By realized faith, he means, "a well-grounded conviction that what I believe makes sense, that it is not a mirage, that I have reasons for being a Christian and a Catholic, which first of all satisfies my mind as credible." I think what he is making reference to here is the need for apologetics, an explanation and defense of the Catholic Faith.

Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith

Above we said that Divine Faith is even more certain than human faith. Recall that we earlier quoted Fr. Hardon as saying "much of our practical knowledge in life and almost all of our theoretical knowledge are based on human faith." On the other hand, he asserts in the *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that "Divine faith is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it. It is not merely a feeling or a suspicion or an opinion, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to a truth revealed by God."

All that God has revealed and nothing else is the object of Divine Faith, for it is that and that alone which can be accepted on the word of God. Though a person may be able by his own resources to learn the main truths revealed by God, the normal and usual way is through the Church which has been commissioned by Christ to teach in his name and with his authority. Divine Faith is a supernatural act and therefore requires the grace of God. This grace is given to all adults who do not place any obstacle in its way. Without faith no man can be saved. For infants the virtue of faith received at the time of Baptism suffices, but for adults an act of supernatural faith that God exists and rewards the good and punishes the evil is necessary for salvation. Divine faith is an infused virtue. Regarding Divine Faith the *Catechism* states:

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe 'because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.' So 'that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit.' Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of

all; they are 'motives of credibility' (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is 'by no means a blind impulse of the mind.' Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives.' 'Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt'" (No. 156).

The Motive of Divine Faith

The motive of Divine Faith is the reason why we believe; it moves or motivates us to believe. We believe because of God's authority, his unfailing knowledge and truthfulness. We believe because God can neither deceive nor be deceived. We believe the truths of Faith not because our minds understand or see them, but because the infinitely wise and truthful God has revealed them. Fr. Hardon explains the grounds of the Motive of Faith as follows:

1. The Christ event grounds its own reality and certitude. In this regard, he says that, "The risen Jesus manifests himself to his disciples and thus creates in them an experiential certitude regarding his Resurrection; this certitude then finds expression in the Christian kerygma."
2. The apostolic community, the early ecclesia (Church), enjoys a primary and privileged position in mediating this Christ-event to the entire world. Regarding this, Fr. Hardon says "This first Christian community experienced the risen Lord and received an abundance of his transforming Spirit. They had no doubts about their proclamation, for it was rooted in what they could not possibly deny: their day by day experience of Jesus of Nazareth culminating in his Passion and death and crowned by the staggering experience of his risen life. 'For this reason, the apostolic Church is normative for the Christian faith of every age, not simply because it is not possible to come in touch with the Christ-event except through the testimony of the apostolic Church but also and above all because the apostolic Church came into being through a privileged grace and revelation of Christ.'"
3. Within this early Church were conceived and from her womb were born the New Testament writings. On this matter, Fr. Hardon tells us that "These compositions were authored by her members and attested to by the whole community under the guidance of her leaders, the Apostles and their successors. Thus the New Testament and the apostolic Church are interlinked as normative for all later ages. They in turn are tied in with the unshakable Christ-event. The Spirit of the risen Jesus, who transformed the apostolic community on Pentecost, also inspired the Scriptures and continues to dwell in the Church, which Jesus founded. This risen Lord through his Spirit is the radical ground of our certitude, for he caused the Resurrection, inspired the New Testament and dwells in the pilgrim Church."

Fr. Hardon concludes his discussion of the grounds for the motive of Faith by saying, “This ecclesial community in unbroken continuity from the first century to the twentieth and beyond cannot betray its indwelling Lord for he is with her until the end of time (Matthew 28:20). She cannot teach error, for ‘when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the whole truth’ (John 16:13). This Spirit is given to the Church forever, not just for the first century (John 14:16). Human beings cannot have a more secure source of certitude.” In summary, the Catholic Church was witness to the events described in the Bible, its apostles wrote them down in the scriptures, and the Church transmitted them down through the ages for the benefit of humankind. This is why St. Augustine said that he couldn’t believe what was in the Bible except for the witness of the Church.

How one arrives at Divine Faith: St. Thomas Aquinas’ defined believing or having faith as “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth, by command of the will, assisted by God’s grace.” Fr. Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines intellect as “The spiritual power of cognition, knowing reality in a nonmaterial way. [It is] the faculty of thinking in a way essentially higher than with the senses and the imagination. It is possessed by human beings, disembodied souls, and the angels, both good and demonic.” The intellect is our ability to understand and think. He defines the will as “The power of the human soul, or of a spiritual being, which tends toward a good or away from an evil recognized by the intellect. It is basically a rational appetite with several functions, namely the ability to intend, choose, desire, hope, consent, hate, love, and enjoy.” According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the will is an innate inclination towards the good. In other words, it is a natural appetite or inclination for a general goodness. The intellect’s role is to determine which particular good to seek and present to it to the will for consideration as something good. Since the intellect is an inclination towards truth and the will is oriented toward the good, the greatest good is truth, and the greatest of all truths is Truth itself, which is God; therefore, the intellect is an inclination towards truth, which ultimately leads to God.

Regarding believing, Fr. Hardon states it is “the acceptance of something as true on a trustworthy person’s word. It differs from [divine] faith only in the stress on confidence in the one who is believed. Moreover, belief emphasizes the act of the will, which disposes one to believe, where faith is rather the act of the mind, which assents to what is believed.” The role of the will in faith is to command the intellect to give assent to what is presented to it by the intellect. The intellect must determine whether or not something proposed to it is reasonable to believe, that it is something good to believe, but the will must move the intellect to give its assent. The recognition of truth, the goodness of the object, or of the reasonableness of belief incites the will, which brings reason (intellect) to assent. Still yet, God must move the will to accept the theological virtue of Divine Faith, but only if the recipient is willing to accept it, for God respects our freedom of the will and does not force anything on us. Having Divine Faith makes one absolutely certain of that which the Church proposes as true. One scholar perceptively summarizes this matter for us:

In order for the will to move the intellect to assent, and in order to preserve the truth basis of an agent’s set of beliefs, the will must get the intellect to somehow judge that the proposition in question is more likely to be true than not. Consequently, the will gets the intellect to arrive at the likely truth of the proposition by working through other acts of the

intellect, such as focusing on one kind of evidence over another, paying attention to certain kinds of facts and disregarding others, or giving more weight to some pieces of the evidence and less to others. In doing so, the will gets the intellect to judge that the proposition is most likely true and thus the will is able to command the intellect to assent. Not only does the will play an important role in acquiring ordinary beliefs, but Aquinas also teaches that the will is essential to Divine Faith. The object of Divine Faith is God himself, the greatest good of all.

Wherever one gets his or her information, study must be done prayerfully to achieve understanding of what he or she has learned. Done in this spirit, the Holy Spirit inspires us with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Faith. Fr. Juan R. Vélez, an expert on the theology of John Henry Newman, gives us the final word on this by stating “what does [Newman] say to the average person striving to live a Christian life in a secular world? Newman advised to walk by faith and to win one’s salvation with “fear and trembling.” In other words, if you want the prize you must fight for it, and this calls for a humble faith in God.

Motives of Credibility

The term motives of credibility has come up several times during our discussion. It must not be confused with Motives of Divine Faith. We said above that the Motive of Divine Faith is the reason why we believe. We believe because of God's authority, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is God who moves us to believe if we accept his offer of grace. On the other hand, motives of credibility are the signs, and among them the most certain are miracles and prophecies, by which we can conclude with full certitude that God has revealed and that therefore there is a strict obligation to accept the truths he has made known. Motives of credibility deal with evidence that what has been revealed is true. It is these motives of credibility which precede the act of faith and which make it essentially reasonable to assent to the truths of faith

In other words, motives of credibility prepare the will to receive the infused virtue of Divine Faith. They make the truths of the Faith believable, i.e. credible, or reasonable to believe. They motivate us to open ourselves to the infusion of God's gift of Divine Faith. The more we open ourselves to God's grace, the more grace he will infuse into our souls and the stronger will be our faith. This is true because once one is certain that God has spoken, it is unreasonable to withhold assent to what he has revealed. Motives of credibility are signs by which we can be certain of the truths that God has revealed; therefore one is strictly obligated to accept the truths he has made known. Among the surest motives of credibility are miracles and prophecies. Essentially, apologetics is the science of motives of credibility, because it strives to make reasonable the truths of the faith.

The Church has spoken officially regarding the motives of credibility. For example, the First Vatican Council said in regard to the motives of credibility, “in order that the submission of our faith should be in accordance with reason, it was God's will that there should be linked to the internal assistance of the Holy Spirit external indications of his revelation, that is to say divine

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acts, and first and foremost miracles and prophecies, which clearly demonstrating as they do the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are the most certain signs of revelation and are suited to the understanding of all” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic faith, Chapter 3, On faith).

I'll give an analogy I have heard to illustrate our point. Motives of credibility prepare the soil in which the planter, God, can plant the seed of faith. The motives of credibility plow and cultivate the soil, the soil being analogous to the soul's faculties of intellect and free will. The motives, which are reasons to believe, are introduced to the intellect, which determines whether or not they are reasonable to believe, which are, in turn, presented to the will to decide whether or to give assent. When the soil is ready, the planter, the Holy Spirit, plants the seeds of faith, which are analogous to the motive of faith, which is based on God's authority, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. So, when one has faith, that is, he believes what God has revealed, he or she can say the Nicene Creed with a firm conviction that the statements contained therein are true.

To repeat, the Motives of credibility are reasons to believe. Motive means to move and credibility means “the quality or power of inspiring belief.” Motives of credibility are the signs, such as miracles and prophecies, by which we can be certain of what God has revealed, and that there is a strict obligation to accept the truths he has made known. Motives of credibility deal with evidence that what has been revealed is true or at least reasonable to believe. The evidence is found in many sources: miracles and fulfilled prophecies found in the Old and New Testaments; the Tradition of the Catholic Church; the writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and other saintly theologians down through the ages; the glorious history of the Catholic Church; scientific discoveries that support the Faith; modern miracles; the lives of countless virtuous and holy persons; hundreds of logical inferences taken from Scholastic and Personalist philosophies; personal religious experience; internal experience of conscience; and others.

St. Thomas Aquinas defined believing or having faith as “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth, by command of the will, assisted by God's grace.” Motives of Credibility precede the act of faith and make it reasonable to assent or agree to the truths of Faith. They prepare the will to receive the infused virtue of Divine Faith. They make the truths of the Faith believable, credible. They motivate us to open ourselves to the infusion of the gift of faith. The more we open ourselves to God's grace, the more grace he will infuse into our souls and the stronger will be our faith. This is true because once one is certain that God has spoken, it is unreasonable to withhold assent to what he has revealed. Motives of credibility are signs by which we can be certain of the truths that God has revealed; therefore, one is strictly obligated to accept the truths he has made known.

It is important to emphasize here that although the motives of credibility precede faith and dispose one to believe the truths of the Faith, they are not the cause of Divine Faith itself. This can't be emphasized too much; faith is not a consequence of a careful study of the motives of credibility. In other words, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it for several

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reasons, such as an unwillingness to live by the Faith if assent is given. Faith is the free gift of God. Any one of the hundreds of motives for believing the truth of the Catholic Faith by itself does not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith, but the weight of all of them put together provide irrefutable proof that the Catholic Church is the Church established by Jesus Christ and that everything that it teaches is true.

Newman explained in *A Grammar of Assent* how the human mind proceeds in matters of inference, assent and certitude, and how the faculty of judgment—the illative sense—ranges over a far greater diversity and quantity of different kinds of evidence than logical or scientific methodology can ever produce. Therefore, judgment allays our doubts and produces certainty on the vast majority of human questions, which neither science nor logic are suited to answer. Jeffrey Mirus states of this matter that:

It is to Newman that we owe the profound insight that we become certain of things not through a discursive analysis of all the logical arguments which may be made for and against (for logic, which is so useful with respect to abstractions, offers very little when it comes to facts), but rather through a growing awareness—either over considerable time or in just a few moments—that there is such a convergence of probabilities in favor of the thing under consideration that it must be true. From this convergence of probabilities arises certitude.

Nonetheless, in the final analysis faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary out-come of assent to the Motives of credibility. The Church has twice condemned the view that faith ultimately rests on an accumulation of probabilities. Thus the proposition “The assent of supernatural faith . . . is consistent with merely probable knowledge of revelation” was condemned by Innocent XI in 1679 and the “Syllabus of Errors” in 1907 condemns the proposition that “the assent of faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities. Therefore, faith is essentially an act of assent, and would be impossible without a supernatural strengthening of the natural light of faith.

In summary, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it. Faith is the free gift of God. Hence the Vatican Council I teaches that “faith is a supernatural virtue by which we with the inspiration and assistance of God's grace, believe those things to be true which He has revealed.” The same decree goes on to say that “al-though the assent of faith is in no sense blind, yet no one can assent to the Gospel teaching in the way necessary for salvation without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who be-stows on all a sweetness in believing and consenting to the truth.”

Motives of Credibility: Old Testament or Covenant: First, I will provide a little background. The Old Testament is the story of the creation, fall, and the beginning of the redemption of humankind. After the fall, God began to gradually reveal himself to humanity. To begin the

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process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family, he made covenants or agreements with a chosen people, the Hebrews. The story of the old covenant is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, each covenant progressively adding more and more people to God's family. In the old covenant, God promises to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments.

Now let's consider the motives of credibility found in the Old Testament. Considering the Old Testament not as an inspired book, but merely as a book having historical value, we find a detailed account of God's marvelous dealings with the Israelite nation to whom he repeatedly reveals himself. God revealed his commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. The covenant was sealed by sacrificing animals. In the Old Testament we read of God performing numerous miracles to benefit his people and as proofs of the truth of his revelation to them. There also we find the most sublime teaching and the repeated announcement of God's desire to save the world from sin and its consequences.

The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this repeating cycle and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

Below is a list of miracles recorded in the Old Testament compiled by BELIEVE Religious Information Source

- The flood Gen. 7, 8
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Gen. 19:24
- Lot's wife turned into a "pillar of salt" Gen. 19:26
- Birth of Isaac at Gerar Gen. 21:1
- The burning bush not consumed Ex. 3:3
- Aaron's rod changed into a serpent Ex. 7:10-12
- The ten plagues of Egypt--(1) waters become blood, (2) frogs, (3) lice, (4) flies, (5) murrain, (6) boils, (7) thunder and hail, (8) locusts, (9) darkness, (10) death of the first-born Ex. 7:20-12:30
- The Red Sea divided; Israel passes through Ex. 14:21-31
- The waters of Marah sweetened Ex. 15:23-25
- Manna sent daily, except on Sabbath Ex. 16:14-35
- Water from the rock at Rephidim Ex. 17:5-7

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- Nadab and Abihu consumed for offering "strange fire" Lev. 10:1, 2
- Some of the people consumed by fire at Taberah Num. 11:1-3
- The earth opens and swallows up Korah and his company; fire and plague follow at Kadesh Num. 16:32
- Aaron's rod budding at Kadesh Num. 17:8
- Water from the rock, smitten twice by Moses, Desert of Zin Num. 20:7-11
- The brazen serpent in the Desert of Zin Num. 21:8, 9
- Balaam's ass speaks Num. 22:21-35
- The Jordan divided, so that Israel passed over dryshod Josh. 3:14-17
- The walls of Jericho fall down Josh. 6:6-20
- The sun and moon stayed. Hailstorm Josh. 10:12-14
- The strength of Samson Judg. 14-16
- Water from a hollow place "that is in Lehi" Judg. 15:19
- Dagon falls twice before the ark. Emerods on the Philistines 1 Sam. 5:1-12
- Men of Beth-shemesh smitten for looking into the ark 1 Sam. 6:19
- Thunderstorm causes a panic among the Philistines at Ebenezer 1 Sam. 7:10-12
- Thunder and rain in harvest at Gilgal 1 Sam. 12:18
- Sound in the mulberry trees at Rephaim 2 Sam. 5:23-25
- Uzzah smitten for touching the ark at Perez-uzzah 2 Sam. 6:6, 7
- Jeroboam's hand withered. His new altar destroyed at Bethel 1 Kings 13:4-6
- Widow of Zarephath's meal and oil increased 1 Kings 17:14-16
- Widow's son raised from the dead 1 Kings 17:17-24
- Drought, fire, and rain at Elijah's prayers, and Elijah fed by ravens 1 Kings 17, 18
- Ahaziah's captains consumed by fire near Samaria 2 Kings 1:10-12
- Jordan divided by Elijah and Elisha near Jericho 2 Kings 2:7, 8, 14
- Elijah carried up into heaven 2 Kings 2:11
- Waters of Jericho healed by Elisha's casting salt into them 2 Kings 2:21, 22
- Bears out of the wood destroy forty-two "young men" 2 Kings 2:24
- Water provided for Jehoshaphat and the allied army 2 Kings 3:16-2
- The widow's oil multiplied 2 Kings 4:2-7
- The Shunammite's son given, and raised from the dead at Shunem 2 Kings 4:32-37
- The deadly pottage cured with meal at Gilgal 2 Kings 4:38-41
- An hundred men fed with twenty loaves at Gilgal 2 Kings 4:42-44
- Naaman cured of leprosy, Gehazi afflicted with it 2 Kings 5:10-27
- The iron axe-head made to swim, river Jordan 2 Kings 6:5-7
- Ben hadad's plans discovered. Hazael's thoughts, etc. 2 Kings 6:12
- The Syrian army smitten with blindness at Dothan 2 Kings 6:18
- The Syrian army cured of blindness at Samaria 2 Kings 6:20
- Elisha's bones revive the dead 2 Kings 13:21
- Sennacherib's army destroyed, Jerusalem 2 Kings 19:35
- Shadow of sun goes back ten degrees on the sun-dial of Ahaz, Jerusalem 2 Kings 20:9-11
- Uzziah struck with leprosy, Jerusalem 2 Chr. 26:16-21
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the fiery furnace, Babylon Daniel

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3:10-27

- Daniel saved in the lions' den Dan. 6:16-23
- Jonah in the whale's belly. Safely landed Jonah 2:1-10

Motives of Credibility: New Testament or Covenant: The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the New Testament, the New and Everlasting. Covenant. The New Testament is the story of the redemption of mankind. It describes the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, one who, while clearly man, also claimed to be God, and who proved the truth of his claim by living a life of perfect holiness and virtue, by performing marvelous miracles, by making prophecies that came true, by uttering sublime teachings, and finally by his triumphant resurrection. All of these are motives of credibility proving that Jesus Christ is who he said he is, the Son of God Incarnate. Below are listed miracles of Jesus described in the New Testament:

Control of Nature

- Calming the storm – Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:22-25
- Feeding 5,000 - Matthew 14:14-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
- Walking on water - Matthew 14:22-32; Mark 6:47-52; John 6:16-21
- Feeding 4,000 – Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9
- Fish with coin – Matthew 17:24-27
- Fig tree withers – Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-25
- Huge catch of fish – Luke 5:4-11; John 21:1-11
- Water into wine – John 2:1-11

Healing of Individuals

- Man with leprosy – Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14
- Roman centurion's servant – Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
- Peter's mother-in-law – Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:30-31; Luke 4:38-39
- Two men possessed with devils – Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-15; Luke 8:27-39
- Man with palsy – Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26
- Woman with bleeding – Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
- Two blind men – Matthew 9:27-31
- Dumb, devil-possessed man - Matthew 9:32-33
- Canaanite woman's daughter – Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
- Boy with devil - Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:17-29; Luke 9:38-43
- Two blind men – including Bartimaeus - Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
- Demon-possessed man in synagogue – Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
- Blind man at Bethsaida – Mark 8:22-26
- Crippled woman – Luke 13:10-17
- Man with dropsy – Luke 14:1-4
- Ten men with leprosy – Luke 17:11-19

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- The high priest's servant – Luke 22:50-51
- Nobleman's son at Capernaum – John 4:46-54
- Sick man at the pool of Bethesda – John 5:1-15
- Man born blind – John 9:1-41

Raising the Dead

- Jairus' daughter – Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
- Widow's son at Nain – Luke 7:11-17
- Lazarus – John 11:1-44

To conclude our discussion of the Old and New Testaments, God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that man could keep his end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a New and Ever-lasting Covenant on man's behalf. The New and Everlasting Covenant, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and else-where in the Gospel. In the Old Testament, God was preparing the world for the redemption of the world when the Father was to send his only begotten Son into the world to save us. This agreement was sealed in the New Covenant or Testament by the Precious Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross, which is made present at each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Motives of Credibility: History of the Catholic Church: When we come to the history of this Church after Jesus' ascension into Heaven, we find the Church that he established growing rapidly everywhere in the Mediterranean World and beyond, and this was in spite of her humble origin, her unworldly teaching, and the horrible persecution she endured at the hands of the rulers of this world. And as the centuries went by as Fr. Hardon tells us we find this Church battling against heresies, schisms, and the sins of her own people, even of her own rulers, and yet continuing on, disseminating the same doctrine, and putting before men the same mysteries of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world's Savior, who had, as she taught, gone before to prepare a home for those who while on earth should have believed in him and lived lives in accordance with his will. By any standards these developments were miraculous, that is, their cause was far beyond and above the natural realm of things.

These and many more miraculous developments go a long way to making it reasonable to believe the truth of the Church's claims. As Fr. Hardon says:

The history of the Church since New Testament times wonderfully confirms the New Testament itself, and if the New Testament so marvelously completes the Old Testament, these books [books of the Bible] must really contain what they claim to contain, viz. Divine revelation. And more than all, that Person Whose life and death were so minutely foretold in the Old Testament, and Whose story, as told in the New Testament, so perfectly cor-

responds with its prophetic delineation in the Old Testament, must be what He claimed to be, viz. the Son of God. His work, therefore, must be Divine. The Church which He founded must also be Divine and the repository and guardian of His teaching. Indeed, we can truly say that for every truth of Christianity which we believe Christ Himself is our testimony, and we believe in Him because the Divinity He claimed rests upon the con-current testimony of His miracles, His prophecies His personal character, the nature of His doctrine, the marvelous propagation of His teaching in spite of its running counter to flesh and blood, the united testimony of thousands of martyrs, the stories of countless saints who for His sake have led heroic lives, the history of the Church herself since the Crucifixion, and, perhaps more remarkable than any, the history of the papacy from St. Peter to Pius X.

Fr. Hardon states that all of these point in one direction, they are of every age, they are clear and simple, and are within the grasp of the humblest intelligence. To bring his point home, he quotes the First Vatican Council as saying, “the Church herself, is, by her marvelous propagation, her wondrous sanctity, her inexhaustible fruitfulness in good works, her Catholic unity, and her enduring stability, a great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefragable witness to her Divine commission” (Const. *Dei Filius*).

Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church

We know that he founded the Catholic Church because it contains the following marks or signs:

- **Oneness:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must contain only one faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, and the same visible head, the successor to St. Peter.
- **Holiness:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be holy, because its founder and the Spirit that gives it life are holy; because her doctrines, her sacrifice, and her sacraments are holy; because her members are called to holiness; and because many of her members have achieved holiness.
- **Catholicity:** Catholic means universal. The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be catholic, because she was instituted for all men, is suitable for all men, and has spread throughout the entire world.
- **Apostolicity:** The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be apostolic, because she was founded upon the apostles and their preaching, and because she is governed by their successors, the bishops and popes.

Of all of the religions and churches in the world, only the Catholic Church contains all of these marks. The *Catechism* states regarding this matter that “The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1076). Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to institute his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—the Catholic Church—to con-

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tinue his presence in the world through his sacraments and to preserve, transmit, and interpret his teachings, his Word—the Deposit of Faith. The new People of God are the members of the Catholic Church. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Other factors that identify the Catholic Church as the true church established by Jesus Christ are as follows:

- The Church even now maintains unity against all natural obstacles.
- She has remained stable over two thousand years in the face of every form of external attack.
- She has been able to propagate herself from the first under the most difficult of conditions.
- Her doctrine has been always sublime, her sacraments symbolic of the grace they confer, her authority conducive to the salvation of souls, her character unsurpassably holy.
- She has been marvelously fruitful in all manner of good works, projects, purposes and people since her foundation.
- The antiquity of the Church; no other institution in the world's history comes close to its longevity.
- The fact that the teachings of the Church have never changed over 2,000 years.
- The longevity of the Church in spite of its sinful members, including bad popes and bishops.
- The Church's phenomenal growth throughout the world.
- The holding power of its members.
- The unity of its faith and worship for two millennia.
- The fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, schools, and aid to the poor.
- The sanctity of millions of its members over the centuries.
- The unbroken history of the Church from Jesus Christ to the present.
- The countless miracles attributed to the intercession of the Church.
- The Church has withstood the assaults of Godless totalitarian forces such as Nazism and Communism as no other institution has done.

The following are additional factors that should be considered in identifying the Catholic Church as the one established by Jesus Christ?

- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for evil in the world.
- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for who we are and what our destiny is.
- The Church provides meaning and purpose to our lives as no other institution has ever done.
- The Church provides the best explanation for suffering, sorrow, and death ever devised.
- The Church provides the only reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair.
- The Church is the only institution in the world that fosters a culture of life.

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- The Church is the world's only institution that teaches objective morality and traditional family values.

Any one of the factors considered in the above factors by itself might not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith, but the weight of all of them put together provide irrefutable proof that the Catholic Church is the church established by Jesus Christ. Any person who knows these truths would be a fool if he or she didn't believe in the truth of the Catholic Faith and lived his or her life accordingly. None of the other world religions, except Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, claim to offer divine revelation and that their founders intended to establish churches. Christianity is, of course, the fulfillment of Judaism and Islam, in spite of its claims, is a manmade amalgamation of Christianity, Judaism, and Arabic paganism. All Protestant denominations have human founders and were not established until the sixteenth century and afterwards. Only the Catholic Church fully satisfies the four marks of the true church established by Jesus Christ to convey his revelation and to provide the means of salvation for the human race. Only the fullness of truth (the Deposit of Faith) is found in the Church founded by Jesus Christ and all graces needed for salvation are channeled through her (the Deposit of Grace).

All of this being said, it is important to re-emphasize here that although the motives of credibility precede faith and dispose one to believe the truths of the Faith, they are not the cause of Divine Faith itself. This can't emphasize too much; faith is not a consequence of a careful study of the motives of credibility. In fact, the First Vatican Council expressly condemned this view. In this regard, the Council stated, "If anyone says that the assent of Christian faith is not free, but that it necessarily follows from the arguments which human reason can furnish in its favour . . . ; let him be anathema" (Session. IV). Moreover, the Church has condemned the view that the motives of credibility can in themselves make clear the mysteries of faith. In this regard, St. Thomas says "the arguments which induce us to believe, e.g. miracles, do not prove the faith itself, but only the truthfulness of him who declares it to us, and consequently they do not beget knowledge of faith's mysteries, but only faith." On the other hand, we should not minimize the real ability of the motives of credibility to verify the truth of the gospel, for as Pope Leo XIII stated in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* "Reason declares that from the very outset the Gospel teaching was rendered conspicuous by signs and wonders which gave, as it were, definite proof of a definite truth."

In the final analysis, it's true then that faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. The Church has twice condemned the view that faith ultimately rests on an accumulation of probabilities. Thus the proposition, "The assent of supernatural faith . . . is consistent with merely probable knowledge of revelation" was condemned by Innocent XI in 1679 (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 10th ed., no. 1171); and the "Syllabus of Errors" (*Lamentabili sane*, July, 1907) condemns the pro-position (XXV) that "the assent of faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities." Therefore, faith is essentially an act of assent, and would be impossible without a supernatural strengthening of the natural light of faith.

In other words, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has

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revealed to be true, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it. Faith is the free gift of God. Hence the First Vatican Council (III, iii;) teaches that, “faith is a supernatural virtue by which we with the inspiration and assistance of God's grace, believe those things to be true which He has revealed.” The same decree goes on to say that “although the assent of faith is in no sense blind, yet no one can assent to the Gospel teaching in the way necessary for salvation without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who bestows on all a sweetness in believing and consenting to the truth.” The document continues by saying “The Catholic Church, (III, iv), “has always held that there is a twofold order of knowledge, and that these two orders are distinguished from one another not only in their principle but in their object; in one we know by natural reason, in the other by Divine faith; the object of the one is truth attainable by natural reason, the object of the other is mysteries hidden in God, but which we have to believe and which can only be known to us by Divine revelation.”

Faith Formation

Most Catholics first received their faith in their infancy. Others first receive it in adult-hood. Even though cradle Catholics have faith infused into their souls at Baptism, they still have to undergo a process of confirming their faith as they grow into adulthood much as do converts to the Faith. As the formation of adult faith is discussed, one must remember St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of faith: “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.” Fr. Hardon has given us a thorough explanation of faith formation outlined below.

Since man is endowed with the faculty of reason, reasonable investigation must precede faith. Here we are looking for motives of credibility. In accordance with St. Thomas' definition of faith, motives of credibility inform the intellect, they demonstrate the reasonableness of believing something, but the will must still give its assent moved by the light of faith, which is God's grace. The assent of the will inspired by grace is essential for Divine Faith, which is the holding of some truth as absolutely certain because God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has spoken it.

By using reason, theologians have proven the existence of God, something of his attributes or perfections, the immortality of the soul, and the origin and destiny of man. From these facts, theologians have been able to discover what we owe God, which is true worship of the true God, not in accordance with our ideas, but according to what he himself has revealed. Furthermore, theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe that God has revealed himself to us? Once we grant that he has, where is this revelation to be found?

The Bible is said to contain it; does investigation confirm the Bible's claim? The Old Testament of the Bible contains numerous prophecies of the Messiah; the New Testament tells the story about one who claims to be the fulfillment of these prophecies. Theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe by the use of reason that Jesus Christ is the only one who could have fulfilled

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the prophecies of the Messiah. They have also shown that it is reasonable to believe by the use of reason that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God the Father and that he proved this by living a life of perfect virtue and holiness, by his marvelous teaching, by making prophecies that came true, by performing numerous miracles, and by raising himself from the dead.

Moreover, theologians have shown that it is reasonable to believe that Jesus Christ further claimed to have founded a Church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his graces and mercy. The Church is an infallible guide for all who wish to carry out his will and save their souls. The Church established by Jesus must have certain definite characteristics or marks. It must be One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic; it must claim infallible teaching power. None but the Holy, Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church can claim these characteristics, and her history is indestructible and incontestable proof of her Divine mission. We will investigate all of these matters from a reasonable point of view in this website.

Motives of credibility are not enough in themselves to produce Divine Faith. The inquirer who has come this far in the formation of faith has proceeded by pure reason. It is possible for one on the evidence just given on motives of credibility found in the Bible and the Church's history to make his or her submission to the authority of the Catholic Church and believe her doctrines; however, as Fr. Hardon reminds us, one who has faith based on entirely reasonable grounds has only human, fallible faith.

At this stage of faith formation, it is still possible for the person to use reason to question the various steps in his or her line of argument. One can still hesitate at some truth taught by the Church, and one might withdraw the assent he or she has already given to the Church's teaching authority. At this point in faith formation, one has merely a natural faith. In other words, Fr. Hardon states that the person does not have Divine Faith at all. This is what is meant that motives of credibility, in themselves, do not produce faith. motives of credibility precede the act of faith and make it reasonable to assent or agree to the truths of the Faith. Nonetheless, to have Divine Faith, one must open oneself up to the infusion of the theological virtue of faith, which disposes one to act in accordance with the dictates of reason enlightened by faith.

Fr. Hardon asserts that the person assisted only by motives of credibility does not have Divine Faith at all. Natural faith can be arrived at by the intellect's ability to reason. Divine Faith, on the other hand, is supernatural; it requires more than the intellect's use of reason. Having Divine Faith requires that the human mind must be illumined by a light superior to the light of reason, namely, the light of faith. However, even with this light of faith, the intellect remains human, and the truth to be believed still remains obscure. The final assent of the intellect must come from the will assisted by divine grace, as we have said.

Divine light and divine grace are pure gifts of God, and are consequently only bestowed at God's good pleasure. What one is striving for is a faith of absolute certitude. As theologians have told us, it is here that the heroism of faith comes in; our reason can lead us to the door of faith, but there it leaves us. This reminds me of the old adage that "We can lead a horse to water, but we can't

make him drink.” It is here that the inquirer says, “I believe, Lord, help Thou my unbelief,” which allows us to repress the misgivings of the intellect and say, as did St. Augustine, “Where reason fails there faith builds up.” When the will assents, the light of faith floods the soul and is even reflected back upon the motives of credibility which were diligently studied in one’s search after the truth; and even those preliminary truths which precede all investigation, for example, proofs for God’s very existence. Fr. Hardon concludes that one now sees these things with Divine Faith, and not simply natural faith.

In summary, one might be able by his own efforts learn the main truths revealed by God; however, the usual way is to look to the Catholic Church, which was commissioned by Jesus Christ to teach in his name and with his authority. So that we could fulfill our duty of embracing the true faith and of persevering unwaveringly in it, God, through his only begotten Son, founded the Catholic Church, and he endowed it with clear marks of Oneness, Holiness, Catholicity, and Apostolicity so that she might be recognized by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word. The Church possesses the fullness of Truth in the Deposit of Faith, because Jesus deposited all of his teachings there, and it possesses the Deposit of Grace, because he deposited all of the graces merited by his suffering and death on the Cross there. There exist numerous motives of credibility, that is, reasons to believe, to prove the reasonableness of believing what the Church proposes. Furthermore, since Divine Faith is a supernatural act, to receive it requires the assent of the will moved by the inspiration of God’s grace. Every one of the age of reason can receive this grace who doesn’t place any obstacle in the way of its reception.

The role of the intellect and will in faith formation: Fr. Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines intellect as “The spiritual power of cognition, knowing reality in a nonmaterial way. [It is] the faculty of thinking in a way essentially higher than with the senses and the imagination. It is possessed by human beings, disembodied souls, and the angels, both good and demonic.” The intellect is our ability to understand and think, to reason.

He defines the will as “The power of the human soul, or of a spiritual being, which tends toward a good or away from an evil recognized by the intellect. It is basically a rational appetite with several functions, namely the ability to intend, choose, desire, hope, consent, hate, love, and enjoy.” According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the will is an innate inclination towards the good. In other words, it is a natural appetite or inclination for a general goodness. The intellect’s role is to determine which particular good to seek and present to it to the will for consideration as something good. The greatest good is truth, and the greatest of all truths is Truth itself, which is God; therefore, the intellect is an inclination towards truth. One scholar perceptively writes of this matter:

In order for the will to move the intellect to assent, and in order to preserve the truth basis of an agent’s set of beliefs, the will must get the intellect to somehow judge that the proposition in question is more likely to be true than not. Consequently, the will gets the intellect to arrive at the likely truth of the proposition by working through other acts of the intellect, such as focusing on one kind of evidence over another, paying attention to certain

kinds of facts and disregarding others, or giving more weight to some pieces of the evidence and less to others. In doing so, the will gets the intellect to judge that the proposition is most likely true and thus the will is able to command the intellect to assent.

Not only does the will play an important role in acquiring ordinary beliefs, but Aquinas also teaches that the will is essential to Divine Faith. The object of Divine Faith is God himself, the greatest good of all. The scholar quoted above, states that “since human knowers, in this life, cannot comprehend God directly or immediately, the object of faith is not God but propositions about him. Assent to the propositions of faith (such as the proposition ‘God exists’) is a case in which the assent is not generated by the intellect’s being sufficiently moved by its object. The assent of faith is produced by the will being moved sufficiently by the object of faith [the propositions] and therefore the intellect is brought to assent.” However explained, Divine Faith is a theological virtue infused into the soul by God. The will can’t give its assent without God’s grace. The role of the will in faith formation is in the accepting of his grace, his gift of Divine Faith.

Faith is both human and divine: Recalling St. Thomas’ definition that believing is “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will, moved by God through grace”, the *Catechism* states that, “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. Else-where the *Catechism* tells us that “knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man . . . unable to enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery. This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God’s revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error” (No, 37-38). Nonetheless, “it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions or to trust their promises” (No. 154). In faith “the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace” (No. 155). Again the scholar quoted above is worth quoting at length here:

The contribution of the will to the intellectual assent in faith occurs because of the will’s natural inclination for goodness. The will is moved by considerations of the willer’s happiness and by considerations of God, who is himself the true good. When an agent is presented with the propositions of faith, she sees that these propositions represent the combination of the two ends mentioned above, namely, the eternal life and happiness of the willer in union with God. Even though these propositions are not sufficient to command assent on the part of the intellect, the will recognizes the great good offered by assent to these propositions, and the will thus influences the intellect to assent. When an agent begins to have [natural] faith through the will’s attraction to perfect goodness, God is then able to work on the will of that believer in order to produce a true change of heart and align her will in other aspects with the righteous desires of the heart that a true Christian should possess. The changes that take place after the assent of faith which are of the most impor-

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tance in making the agent a true disciple are changes in the will of the agent to love goodness and hate sin.

To summarize what we have thus far said about faith, faith means the assent of the mind to the truth of some proposition on the word of another, whether the other be God or man. It differs from assent in matters of science, because they are based on evidence of fact, whereas faith is based solely on the word of another. Divine Faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. Divine Faith holds that revealed truths are absolutely certain, because God has spoken them, he who can neither deceive nor be deceived. But even if motives of credibility, such as prophecies and miracles, make it reasonable to believe the truths that God has revealed, only he, with the help of his grace, can move the will to assent to their truth. Faith is more than mere feelings or opinions that something is true, but a firm, unshakeable adherence of the mind to God's revelation. Opinion also results from the will moving the intellect to assent, but in the case of opinion, the agent recognizes that there is evidence both for and against the proposition; therefore, the agent must admit that the knowledge is not completely certain. Faith, unlike opinion, holds to its object with certainty, and in this sense is like proper knowledge (that which is directly experienced by the knower). Faith is the first of the theological virtues, which means that it is oriented to God. Hope and Charity are the other two infused theological virtues.

Although personal faith is an infused virtue, infused into the soul by the action of the Holy Spirit, one still has to open one's mind or intellect to receive it and one's will to accept it. One can use his or her free will to reject God's gift of faith. Faith is then a human act, but one assisted by God. As the *Catechism* tells us, although faith or believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, it is no less true that believing is "an authentically human act" (No.154). It says, "In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace:" then quotes St. Thomas Aquinas' famous definition of faith we just quoted: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace" (No. 155). Our faith is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed. We have faith only if we believe in Christ's entire public revelation. The Catholic Faith is faith that Christ instituted (a divine institution), a Church blessed with authority to infallibly teach his public revelation.

Growing in Faith: Faith is not something that once we have it we will always have it; it is something that we will lose if we don't feed it. Our faith must be constantly fed. If we don't continually feed our faith, it will wither and die, just like our bodies will wither and die if we don't nourish them with food and exercise. Not only the intellect must be continually informed, but also the will must be continually strengthened, the memory cleansed, and the imagination controlled as well. In other words, the entire soul must be nourished. Studying and meditating on our Faith by reading the Bible, the lives of the saints, the Church Fathers, the history of the Church, good religious books and magazines, and other matter can be major sources of nourishment for our souls. Meditating on good reading matter is one means with which we can become holy and achieve union with God.

However, to be holy and achieving union with God requires more than study and prayerful meditation. Although knowledge of God is achieved by study, our knowledge must be transformed into faith in Jesus Christ and his promises. It is one thing to know of God and another to know and believe in him. Many prominent scholars have known a lot about God over the ages, but they didn't know him, they didn't believe in him. We get to know God by exercising our wills to accept his grace, by opening ourselves to accepting his grace, which is his presence in us. Sanctifying grace makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. When we have God's grace in our souls, he infuses into us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as well as the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. When we have the gift of faith, then and only then do we believe, but we have to open ourselves up to it. Faith means to commit oneself to the person of Jesus Christ and to believe all that he teaches. Both the intellect and will play a role in faith. To repeat St. Thomas Aquinas again, "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to [agreeing to] the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace."

But faith in itself is not enough, for it must be transformed into action. God created us not only to know him and to believe in his teachings, but also to love and serve him as well. To do so will earn us happiness in Heaven with him forever. Love is fostered by reading and meditating on the Bible and other holy literature, by prayer and penance, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the cultivation of the theological and moral virtues, the practice of good works, and above all by the grace of God. We will be judged not only by faith, but works as well: by how well we performed the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and use the talents that God has given us to be good stewards. These are the principal means with which we inform our intellects and strengthen our wills so we can better bring them into conformance with the will of God. Love is essentially a decision to do God's will. Did not Jesus say "if you love me, you will "keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He did not say to have good feelings or emotions toward him or any other such thing. St John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and we can love only to the extent we have the love of God in us. When we love, it is God loving through us.

Faith must be continually fed: Our faith must be constantly fed. If we don't continually feed our faith, it will wither and die, just like our bodies will wither and die if we don't nourish them with food. Not only the intellect must be continually informed, but also the will must be continually strengthened and the imagination controlled as well. In other words, the entire soul must be nourished. Studying and meditating on our Faith by reading the Bible, the lives of the saints, the Church Fathers, the history of the Church, good religious books and magazines, and other matter can be major sources of nourishment for our souls. Meditating on good reading matter is one means with which we can become holy and achieve union with God. Of course, this must be supplemented with prayer, good works, and a regular reception of the sacraments, because being holy and achieving union with God requires more than study and meditation.

Although knowledge of God is achieved by study, our knowledge must be transformed into faith in Jesus Christ and his promises. It is one thing to know of God and another to know and believe in him. Many prominent scholars have known a lot about God over the ages, but they didn't know him, they didn't believe in him. We get to know God by exercising our wills to accept his grace,

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which is his presence in us. Sanctifying grace makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. When we have God's grace in our souls, he infuses into us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as well as the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. When we have the gift of faith, then and only then do we believe, but we have to open ourselves up to it. Faith means to commit oneself to the person of Jesus Christ and to believe all that he teaches. Both the intellect and will play a role in faith. In this regard, to quote St. Thomas Aquinas again, "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace." But even faith is not enough in itself, for it must be transformed into action. God created us not only to know him and to believe in his teachings, but also to love and serve him as well. To do so will earn us happiness in Heaven with him forever. Love is fostered by reading and meditating on the Bible and other holy literature, by prayer and penance, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the cultivation of the theological and moral virtues, the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and above all by the grace of God. These are the principal means with which we inform our intellects and strengthen our wills so we can better bring them into conformance with the will of God. Love is essentially a decision to do God's will. Did not Jesus say, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He did not say to have good feelings or emotions toward him or any other such thing. St John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and we can love only to the extent we have the love of God in us. In this sense, when we love, it is God loving through us.

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.



God is one, consisting of a trinity of three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who have existed from all eternity. For this reason, God is called the Holy Trinity. This is a mystery that has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, a mystery that we believe on faith, but will not fully understand until we see God face to face as he is in eternity (see especially the Gospel of John 6, 8, 10, 13-17; 1 John 2; 2 John). The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Nicene Creed that Catholics and some Protestants profess every Sunday describes in outline form the Holy Trinity. It should be obvious from the names of the persons of the Trinity that God is a social being, a family. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. Persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable. However, human personhood is finite, whereas divine personhood is infinite. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our faith, and

the source of all other mysteries, including the Creation and Redemption. The *Catechism* says of the oneness of God in three persons: “The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the ‘consubstantial Trinity.’ The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire:” (No. 253). However, the *Catechism* goes on to say, “The divine persons are really distinct from one another. ‘God is one but not solitary.’ ‘Father,’ ‘Son,’ ‘Holy Spirit’ are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: ‘He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son.’ They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin” (No. 254).

Since God is one in three Persons, it is important that we understand what is meant by person. The concept person has not always existed. The correct definition of person is extremely important, because only persons have rights. One of the reasons there has been such a loss of respect for the lives of human beings in our society is a flawed conception of the human person, for only persons have rights.

Origin of the Word Person

The concept “person” has not always existed. The ancient pagan world had no concept of the person; they simply saw humans as part of a larger entity, such as the family or tribe. Pagans had no conception of the value or uniqueness of each individual, something I think is also true of modern pagans as well. The concept

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of person is unique to Christianity. The Church found it necessary to develop the concept of person to define the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation in the face of heretical attacks on these dogmas. The early Christians, such as the great second century theologian and philosopher Tertullian, first developed the term “person” to define the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines. Severinus Boethius, who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the first that we know of to define the concept “person.” He defined person as “an individual, rational substance.” To better understand his meaning of person let’s look at each of the key words in this definition.

- **Individual:** By individual is meant that a person is separate from all other persons and is unique and irreplaceable.
- **Rational:** By rational is meant that a person has the ability to think or in the case of humans, at least have the potential of rational thought. Of course, God is omniscient, that is, his intellect has no limits; he knows everything. Since humans can think, this definition applies to them as well, even the most severely retarded.
- **Substance:** By saying that a person is a substance, we mean a person exists in himself. Personhood is not an accidental quality like hair color or skin color, but that which distinguishes God from all human beings, human beings from other types of beings, and one human being from another. Substance is the very essence of personhood; it is that which makes a person what he is and not something else. Sometimes nature is used in place of essence, although there is a slight difference in there meaning. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are composed of the same un-created substance. On the other hand, human beings are composed of a substance created by God and co-created by parents, which includes both the body and the soul. The soul forms and gives life to the body; body and soul together compose a human substance.

Boethius’ definition of personal is a good one as far as it goes, but the problem with it is it doesn’t consider the relational aspect of personhood. In summary, persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable, and are related to God and other beings. This definition applies to both the Persons of God and human persons.

God is a Personal God

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. One way of conceptualizing God the Trinity is to think of God the Father as Thinker—the First Person, God the Son as Thought—the Second Person, and God the Holy Spirit as love—the Third Person. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Son is the image and word of the Father. The Father communicates his entire being to his son, thus they are equal and coeternal; they share the same being or substance. The Father and Son then communicate their entire being to the Holy Spirit as an act of love. The three Persons of the Trinity share the same divine spirit, consciousness, omniscient intellect and omnipotent will. God possesses an “absolutely and infinitely eternal perfect spirit” that is always and everywhere present

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(omnipresence). The three Persons also share the same likeness: holiness, wholeness; righteousness, etc.

The Father is the originator of the Trinitarian Family. Since he is the source and origin of the entire divinity, he is called the First Person of the Trinity. The Son is generated by the Father; therefore is called the Second Person of the Trinity. He is the Word and Image of the Father. Since he is eternally generated or begotten (not created or made), he is of the same substance or being as the Father; therefore, he is coequal and coeternal with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, which proceeds from the Father and the Son. The First and Second Persons combine in an act of perfect love for one another that constitutes a Third Person, the Holy Spirit.

How about God's Nature, his likeness to human persons before the fall? God is holy, which means he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature. Moreover, he is infinitely just, which means that he always gives everyone his or her rightful due, what he or she has earned, whether it be rewards or punishments. In summary, persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable. This definition applies to both the Persons of God and human persons.

God is a personal God; in fact, as we have said God is three Divine Persons in one Divine Nature. Moreover, Jesus Christ is a Divine Person, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who possesses both divine and human natures. These dogmas could not have been defined without an understanding of person. Once these dogmas were defined, the concept of person could then be applied to man, who is created in the image and likeness of God, who is a personal God. We will discuss these matters below.

Another important point to make regarding the definition of person is that when the Church defined the dogma of the Trinity, the three Persons in one God, the pattern of all personhood, it did so in terms of relationships. The three Persons are distinguished from one another by their relationships, just as human beings are distinguished by their relationship to God and each other. The *Catechism* says of the relationships among the persons of the Holy Trinity:

The divine persons are relative to one another. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: 'In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance.' Indeed 'everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship.' 'Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.' 'It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.'"
The divine Unity is Triune. (No. 255)

God the Holy Trinity is a mystery that has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ, a mystery that we believe on faith, but do not fully understand. As I said above, the mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our faith, and the source of all other mysteries.

GOD THE FATHER

Jesus Christ himself revealed that God is Father both as Creator and eternally as his Father. He frequently refers in the gospels to his Father in Heaven. The Father is the originator of the Trinitarian Family. Since he is the source and origin of the entire divinity, he is called the First Person of the Trinity. What is meant by saying that the Father is the source and origin of the entire divinity? The Father possesses the infinite ability to know (omniscient Intellect) and to love (omnipotent will). He, who knows himself completely and everything else possible, speaks a single Word that contains all know-ledge of not only what has been, what is, and what will be, but of all possibilities of the past, present, and future. In other words, to speak a single word that encompasses all knowledge requires an infinite intellect, and the Father, who possesses an infinite intellect, speaks an infinite eternal Word that includes all knowledge. The Father can speak a single word containing all know-ledge, because he exists at a vantage point from which he sees everything at once in all of its breadth and depth from all eternity. He has no past or future; he exists outside of time and space; he is preexistent being; he lives in the eternal present, for it is always now for God. This explains why God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush as I AM WHO AM (Exodus 3); God simply is.



Calling God Father indicates that he is the Creator of everything and that he loves and cares for his creation. Many religions have considered God to be a father. God was Father to the Israelites in that he is Creator of the world. Furthermore, God was Father to them because of the covenant and “His gift of the law.” Moreover, God is Father of the poor, the orphaned, and the widowed, whom he lovingly protects. Also, God possesses motherly qualities of intimacy and tenderness towards his creation. However, God is pure Spirit and possesses neither male nor female gender in the human sense. It was Jesus himself who revealed that God is Father, “a father not only in being the Creator, but who is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father.” The distinction among the Persons of the Holy Trinity is not one of gender, but of relationships. The Holy Spirit has been understood to be a Third Person of the Trinitarian Family who processes from the love of the Father and the Son.

Maker of Heaven and Earth

What does it mean that God the Father is maker of heaven and earth? The Trinity consists of a necessary being that has always existed, otherwise, nothing else could have ever existed, not even heaven and earth. The *Catechism* says that, “The Scriptural expression ‘heaven and earth’ means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: “the earth” is the world of men, while ‘heaven’ or ‘the heavens’ can designate both the firmament and God’s own ‘place’—‘our Father in heaven’ and consequently the ‘heaven’ too which is eschatological glory. Finally, ‘heaven’ refers to the saints and the ‘place’ of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God” (No. 186).

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Although there exists three persons in the Holy Trinity, there exists only one God. Therefore, wherever one person is, the other two also are there; they are inseparable. Whenever one person acts they all act in unison. The Church teaches that the “Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both.” Moreover, because of the unity of the Trinity, “The “Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.” Several places in the Bible, especially in St. John’s Gospel, Jesus identifies himself with the Father when he says “I and the Father are one” or when you see me you see the Father.” So when one person does something they all do it together. These truths are called the doctrine of circuminsession. In the Trinity, the essence, will, and action are simply one. Therefore, the Persons do not have separate existence, but exist together in one God. All of the persons of the Trinity play a role in creation; however, there is another doctrine that explains why we usually consider the Father to be the creator; this is the doctrine of appropriation.

What is the doctrine of appropriation? Because of the limits of language and our limited intelligence we often attribute different qualities and roles to each of the persons of the Holy Trinity. This is what is called the doctrine of appropriation. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 edition, says that appropriation “consists in attributing certain names, qualities, or operations to one of the Persons, not, however, to the exclusion of the others, but in preference to the others. The qualities and names thus appropriated belong essentially to all the Persons; yet, according to our understanding of the data of revelation and our theological concepts, we consider some of these characteristics or names as belonging to one Person rather than to another, or as determining more clearly this particular Person. Thus we consider the Father as particularly characterized by omnipotence, the Son by wisdom, and the Holy Ghost by love, though we know that the three have essentially and by nature an equal omnipotence, wisdom, and love (cf. St. Thomas).”

Another example is we appropriate the role of Creation to the Father, the Redemption to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Spirit, although they all play equal roles in these operations. Since the Father begets or generates the son, it is appropriate to think of him as the creator. As we will discuss later in this essay, this does not mean that he creates the son. The Second person is thought as the redeemer, because Jesus Christ suffered and died instead of one of the other persons of the Holy Trinity. It was appropriate that the son become incarnate and suffer and die rather than one of the other persons of the Trinity, because he was the uncreated image of the Father redeeming the created image of God. Since the Holy Spirit is the love of Father and Son for each other, it is appropriate to think of him as God’s love dwelling in our souls making us holy. Thus the Holy Spirit is thought as the sanctifier. But actually since God is one, each of the persons plays a role in creation, redemption, and sanctification.

Why has the Church saw fit to develop the idea of appropriation with respect to the persons of the Holy Trinity? One of the reasons that the Church has saw fit to appropriate different roles for each of the persons of the Trinity is to personalize each one more; this has the psychological effect of recognizing them as persons, which fosters devotion to each of them individually.

Why God created the universe, the angels, and man: The Book of Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created the Heavens and the angels and the Earth in six days and rested on the seventh. On the sixth day He created man in His image and likeness. God did all of this out of His goodness, wisdom, and love and a desire to demonstrate and communicate His glory. Of this the *Catechism* states, “God created the

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world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty—this is the glory for which God created them” (No. 319). Holy Scripture tells us that God said regarding the creation of man, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

He created man to know, love, and serve Him so he could be happy with him in Heaven forever. God placed Adam and Eve in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it (Genesis 2:15). Originally God created our first parents and all of their descendants to be members of his family. They and their descendants were to be God's adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. The Second Person is the Father's Son by nature; Adam and Eve were his son and daughter by adoption and by grace. God's intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever. They and all of their children were to be the Father's heirs. The natural family, consisting of husband, wife, and children, is patterned after the Trinitarian family; it should be the mirror image of the Trinitarian family.

God created man in his image and likeness: To make them worthy of being his adopted children, God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in his image and likeness. The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* tells us that term “image” is a phrase used in Genesis 1:26-27 to designate the special superiority of man over the other works of God's visible creation. This “image of God” is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. In these natural perfections man reflects, in a limited and imperfect way, God, the Infinite Spirit, whose intelligence and freedom are supremely perfect. Man's faculties give him the ability to communicate and have relationships, abilities possessed by the Trinity at the supreme level. Intellect gives man the ability to think and free will the ability to make decisions. We shall discuss below how through sanctifying grace and the infused virtues man's nature is elevated to a supernatural plane of being and acting. The *Catechism* states:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead (No. 357).

Humans are in God's image in that they possess a created immortal spirit or soul; an intellect that is finite, but possessed infused knowledge before the Fall; a human will that is finite, but possessed considerable strength before the Fall. Adam and Eve received three types of gifts from God at their creation:

1. **Natural:** What human beings are and have when they are born: a body and rational soul with the faculties of intellect and will.
2. **Preternatural:** Includes infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence (integrity), and bodily immortality.

3. **Supernatural:** Qualities possessed only by God, but shared with humans in the form of actual and sanctifying grace.

God created man in his likeness: In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was the life of God within them. Because they possessed sanctifying grace and were made holy by the Trinity dwelling in them, they lived at the supernatural level. By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. Justice is often defined as giving someone his due; to give him what he deserves, what he has coming. Man is most just when he renders to God love and obedience, when he obeys his commandments and does his will. In their original state, Adam and Eve were just with respect to God, thus they lived in a state of Original Justice. Of this the *Catechism* states, "By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed. As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die. The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called 'original justice'" (No. 376).

Although life in the Garden of Eden was heaven on earth and Adam and Eve possessed sanctifying grace, experienced perfect natural happiness, and lived in close friendship with God, they did not yet possess the Beatific Vision, the vision of God Himself. That was something they could enjoy only after passing a test of their love and devotion to Him. He wanted His adopted children to love Him by a free choice of their wills. If they had not possessed this ability, they would not have possessed God's image whose will is absolutely free.



Adam and Eve fall from God's grace: Tragically, our first parents lost Original Holiness and Original Justice for themselves and their children by freely choosing to commit the first sin—the Original Sin. God told them they could have everything for their enjoyment in their earthly paradise except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by Lucifer in the disguise of a serpent, first Eve then Adam in their pride ate the forbidden fruit. Pride is the worst sin of all, because one guilty of pride is trying to be God. The serpent had tempted them by telling them that they would not die if they ate the

fruit of the forbidden tree, but instead would be gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

Genesis states of the Forbidden Tree, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in

Humans Created in God’s Image and Likeness

The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. To make Adam and Eve worthy of being his adopted children, the Book of Genesis tells us that on the sixth day God created the first humans in his image and likeness. He didn’t create them out of any deficiency, but out of his abundance, out of his goodness, wisdom, and love and a desire to demonstrate and communicate his glory. God placed Adam and Eve in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it. They and their descendants were to be God’s adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. It is important to note that the Second Person is the Father’s Son by nature; because they were created beings, Adam and Eve were his son and daughter by adoption and by grace. God’s intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever. They and all of their children were to be the Father’s heirs. Unfortunately, they failed their test of their love and devotion to God, and fell from his grace.

The Image of God

- God possesses an “absolutely and infinitely eternal perfect spirit” that is always and everywhere present (omnipresence)
- God’s infinite intellect is all knowing (omniscience)
- God’s infinite will is all powerful (omnipotence)

The Likeness of God

- God is holy, which means he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature.
- God is infinitely just, which means that he always gives everyone his or her rightful due, what he or she has earned, whether it be rewards or punishments.

Humans as the Image of God before the Fall

- Humans possess a created immortal spirit or soul.
- Human intellect is finite, but possessed infused knowledge before the Fall.
- The human will is finite, but possessed considerable strength before the Fall.

Adam and Eve received three types of gifts from God at their creation:

1. **Natural:** What human beings are and have when they are born
2. **Preternatural:** Includes infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence (integrity), and bodily immortality.
3. **Supernatural:** Qualities possessed only by God, but shared with humans in the form of actual and sanctifying grace

Humans as God’s Likeness before the Fall

- In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. The Original Holiness, that is, the wholeness, perfection, blessedness, integrity, goodness, and righteousness possessed by our first parents was due to God’s sanctifying grace, which was the life of God within them, the indwelling Trinity. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God’s sanctifying grace
- The Original Justice possessed by Adam and Eve means that until their fall from God’s grace, they always gave him his due by praising and worshipping him and doing his will. They possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. They were an adopted son and daughter of God the Father and a brother and sister to his Son and heirs to Heaven

Human Image to God after the Fall

In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after committing Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin.

Human Likeness to God after the Fall

Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God’s image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father’s heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the father’s plan to send his son into the world some day to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children.

the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Genesis 2:15-17). The *Catechism* says of this tragic event, "The entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents" (No. 379).

The terrible consequences of Original Sin: Upon discovering that Adam and Eve had disobeyed his commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God said to the woman, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:16-19). In other words, as St. Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The *Catechism* nicely summarizes what I just quoted from Holy Scripture where it tells us:

Although it is proper to each individual, Original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of Original Holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin—an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases Original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle (No. 405).

To quote the *Catechism* further on the consequences of Original Sin:

The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history (No. 400).

As a result of their original sin, Adam and Eve fell from God's grace and were driven out of the Garden of Eden into a world of suffering and sorrow, death and destruction. When they were banished from the Garden, they entered into a world of darkness and despair, a world where war, famine, disease, pestilence, natural disasters, accidents, civil disorders, crime, and terrorism were to abound, a place where hatred, suffering, sorrow, death, and destruction were to triumph. It was not long before one of their sons committed the first murder in history; Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Worst of all, they no longer lived at the supernatural level, because the Trinity no longer dwelled in their souls; they were what we Catholics would call in state of mortal sin, their souls were dead because God no longer dwelled in them. They and all of their descendants would live only at the natural level.

Original Sin affects man's image: In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin,

which is death. They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs until redeemed by Christ. In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after committing Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin.

Of the three types of gifts Adam and Eve had received at their creation, the natural gifts of intellect was diminished and of free will weakened. The preternatural gifts of infused knowledge, integrity, and bodily immortality were lost for good. The biggest loss of all was the loss of the supernatural gift of God's sanctifying grace, the very loss of God's indwelling in their souls.

Original Sin affects man's likeness to God: Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the father's plan to send his son into the world some day to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children

Why did all of Adam and Eve's descendants inherit the stain of Original Sin? Some would say that this doesn't seem fair. In this regard, the *Catechism* says:

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man'. By this 'unity of the human race' all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called 'sin' only in an analogical sense: it is a sin 'contracted' and not 'committed'—a state and not an act" (No. 404).

Original Sin destroyed the harmony between God and man, the inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and the harmony between our first parents and all of creation.

By their original sin, Adam and Eve lost their friendship with God and their place in the Trinitarian Family. Since they were banished from God's Family and disinherited, all they had to pass on to their descendants was the stain of Original Sin. Since by disobedience our first parents lost Original Holiness and Justice, we the children inherited the stain of their Original Sin, for they no longer possessed these qualities to pass on to us. In spite of this man remained in God's image, but was "deprived of the glory of his likeness."

Humans still possess the image of God, although damaged: Even after committing Original Sin, man still possesses the image of God, because unlike the fallen angels who were cast into Hell when they rebelled against God, man was not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. The angels possessed intellects so far above humans, and wills so much stronger, that God didn't give them another chance. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will. In this regard, the *Catechism* states, In spite of this "man remains 'in the image of God,' in the image of the Son, but is deprived 'of the glory of God,' of his 'likeness'" (No. 705). However, Original Sin diminished their intellects and weakened their wills, and they were to suffer from the urge to commit actual sin, which is called concupiscence. Moreover, in the fallen state they were subject to suffering, sorrow, and death. Yet God still loved them and considered them redeemable, capable of being freed from the power of Satan and the slavery of sin.

In other words, after the Fall, human beings remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), but they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice). Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness.

There are reasons for hope: Although humans had fallen from grace and had lost God's friendship, God continued to love them, so much so that it was in his plan—His divine providence—to one day send his Son into the world to redeem humankind. Redeem means to pay for something, and in this instance we mean that Jesus Christ paid for all of the damage caused by Original and actual sins. It was Jesus Christ, the son of God the Father, who restored the dignity of man by becoming a man himself. It was He who made it possible for man once again to become holy and friends with God, to once again become children of God the Father.

Salvation History is the story of God's plan to restore mankind to the Trinitarian family, to make human beings once again children of God, i.e., sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus. The *Catechism* says, "The Son Himself became man and assumed the human image and restored it in the likeness of the Father by giving it again its Glory." By taking on the image of man, Jesus was to restore man's likeness to its original glory. As it says in the Mass, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity.

Why did God allow sin to enter the world? The *Catechism* asked this precise question: "But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, 'Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away.' And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, 'There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'" (No. 412). I used to teach religion in the St. Patrick Middle School, and I asked my 8th Grade students that question. One of my students answered very perceptibly that God let Adam and Eve sin so that he could one day show the human race how much he loved them by sending his only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for their salvation (See John 3:16). One of our classrooms at John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until

retirement has above one of the boards, "The worst thing that ever happened caused the greatest thing that ever happened, for us."

Other consideration about the Holy Trinity

Theologians have named the internal processions of the three divine persons "circuminsession". Fr. Hardon defines circuminsession in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as "The mutual immanence of the three distinct persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father is entirely in the Son, likewise in the Holy Spirit; and so is the Son in the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son. Circuminsession also identifies the mutual immanence of the two distinct natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ." They have named the mutual interpenetration and indwelling of the Father and the Son "perichoresis", stressing the one nature or essence of the three persons in God. Fr. Hardon writes that

The penetration and indwelling of the three divine persons reciprocally in one another. In the Greek conception of the Trinity there is an emphasis on the mutual penetration of the three persons, thus bringing out the unity of the divine essence. In the Latin idea called circuminsession the stress is more on the internal processions of the three divine persons. In both traditions, however, the fundamental basis of the Trinitarian perichoresis is the one essence of the three persons in God. The term is also applied to the close union of the two natures in Christ. Although the power that unites the two natures proceeds exclusively from Christ's divinity, the result is a most intimate coalescence. The Godhead, which itself is impenetrable, penetrates the humanity, which is thereby deified without ceasing to be perfectly human.

However, there is a tendency to use the terms interchangeably. The doctrine of perichoresis is based on St. John's Gospel that "the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father" (John 17:21). St. John of Damascus, a seventeenth century monk and priest, who helped develop the concept said, "Such is the fellowship in the Godhead that the Father and the Son not only embrace each other, but they also enter into each other, permeate each other, and dwell in each other. One in being, they are also always one in the intimacy of their friendship. This intimacy is unique to family. As the Holy Family, the Father and the Son enter into each other and dwell, not only with, but also in each other" (quoted in Fr. Kenneth Baker's *Fundamentals of Catholicism, Vol. 2* and is probably taken from St. John of Damascus' Exposition of the Orthodox Faith).

Some, Catholics and Protestants, mistakenly think that the three Persons are separate, independent beings, which is equivalent to saying that there are three separate gods. This view would mean that each person had his own intellect, will, and consciousness. This view is false, however, because it is only in their relationships that they differ. In God the three persons share the same intellect, will, and consciousness. Fr. Baker states in his *Fundamentals of Catholicism* that they, "share equally in all the divine actions and operations that are proper to the divine nature," and emphasizes that, "The point of the teaching is to stress that the three divine Persons are perfectly

one in being, knowing and willing.”

Another point that is important to emphasize with respect to the Holy Trinity is that all the activities outside of itself are performed by all three Persons. The Church has always taught that when one of the persons acts, they all act together. Fr. Baker tells us that a careful reading of the Bible reveals this truth, because “Scripture often attributes the same activity in the created world now to the Father, now to the Son and now to the Holy Spirit. For example, the Incarnation of the second Person is attributed to the Father (Hebrews 10:5), to the Son (Philippians 2:7) and to the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20). The same can be said for a number of other divine activities in the world such as creation, redemption, sanctification and the forgiveness of sins. One reason for these statements is to bring out that all three Persons are equally active in the creation and salvation of the world.”

There is one final Trinitarian doctrine that I would like to mention, and that is the doctrine of appropriation. Because of the limits of language and our limited intelligence, we often attribute different qualities and roles to each of the persons of the Holy Trinity. This is what is called the doctrine of appropriation. The *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 edition, says that appropriation:

consists in attributing certain names, qualities, or operations to one of the Persons, not, however, to the exclusion of the others, but in preference to the others. The qualities and names thus appropriated belong essentially to all the Persons; yet, according to our understanding of the data of revelation and our theological concepts, we consider some of these characteristics or names as belonging to one Person rather than to another, or as determining more clearly this particular Person. Thus we consider the Father as particularly characterized by omnipotence, the Son by wisdom, and the Holy Ghost by love, though we know that the three have essentially and by nature an equal omnipotence, wisdom, and love" (cf. St. Thomas).

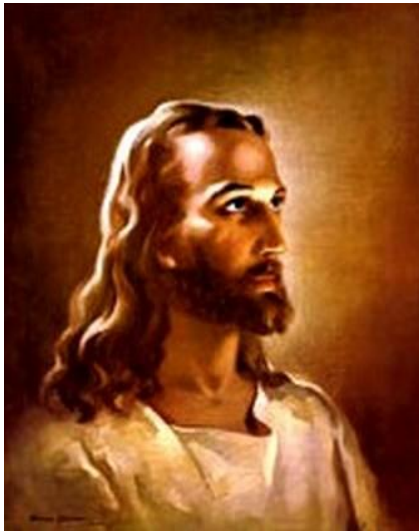
Another example that I can think of is we appropriate the role of Creation to the Father, Redemption to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Spirit, although they all play equal roles in these operations. Since the Father begets or generates the Son, it is appropriate to think of him as the creator. Of course, this does not mean that he creates the Son, however. The second person is thought of as the redeemer, because Jesus Christ suffered and died instead of one of the other persons of the Holy Trinity. It was appropriate that the Son become incarnate and suffer and die rather than one of the other persons of the Trinity, because he was the uncreated image of the Father redeeming the created image of God. Since the Holy Spirit is the love of Father and Son for each other, it is appropriate to think of him as God's love dwelling in our souls making us holy. Thus the Holy Spirit is thought as the sanctifier. But actually since God is one, each of the persons plays an equal role in creation, redemption, and sanctification. Those who replace the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier to avoid using masculine terms are in grave error, because the latter terms designate what the Persons of the Trinity do and not who they are.

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You might ask why did the Church see fit to develop the idea of appropriation with respect to the persons of the Holy Trinity? One of the reasons that the Church has seen fit to appropriate different roles for each of the persons of the Trinity is to personalize each one more; this has the psychological effect of recognizing them as persons, which fosters devotion to each of them individually.

There are many other important points that could be made about the Trinitarian Family, but I want to make one last comment about why it is important to know something about the inner workings of the Trinity. In the first place Jesus revealed these things to us, so they must be pretty important for us to know. Furthermore, the Church has spent a lot of time and effort over the centuries to clarify the relationship among the persons of the Trinity as well as their relationship with the creation. Jesus simply told us that God consisted of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but he did not fill in the details. It was not long after he ascended into Heaven that theologians began to speculate on the relationships among the persons of the Trinitarian God, the relationship between Jesus' human and divine natures, and the relationship between God and his creation. Many of these theological speculations were in error and contributed to heresies that had to be corrected by the Church. Another reason that we should want to know more about God is that we want to know as much as we can about the ones we love. The more we know about God, the more we can love him, and the more we love him, the better we can serve him. St Teresa of Avila, who loved God as much as any person who has ever lived, used to meditate a lot on the mystery of the Trinity. Once she was blessed with a mystical experience that gave her a much deeper understanding of the Trinity, a mystery that was so profound that she could never put it into meaningful words. Most of us will not have this insight until we see God face to face in the Beatific Vision after our death and purification, but in the meantime we can get to know him better so we can love him all the more and better serve him.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages.



I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ: According to one source, during Jesus' time, "lordship" meant absolute, undisputed ownership. The person called "lord" was an absolute, undisputed master. Throughout the New Testament, those who interacted with Jesus, but did not yet believe, addressed him with titles of honor, like "teacher" or "rabbi." When we profess of Jesus as "Lord," like His disciples, we signify that he is undisputed master over our lives and is worthy of worship.

The relationship between the Father and the Son is a mystery that we do not understand very well, but it is pretty clear from the revelation found in St. John's Gospel that the Word is a distinct person, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The relationship between the Father and the Word is that of father and son. The only distinction between the Father and the Son is that of relationship. The Father generates the Son, which means the Son is begotten of the Father. Both possess the same divine nature in its entirety, but the Father begets and the Son is begotten. The distinction among the three persons of the Trinity is not one of being or nature, but of relationships, relationships that are familial in essence.

Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of the Father: The Father Begets or generates the Son. Fr. Hardon explains divine generation as:

The procession of the Second Person of the Trinity from the First, i.e., the generation of the Son by the Father. As explained by the Church, this generation is eternal and takes place in a manner similar to the intellectual activity of the human soul. "Just as our spirit knowing itself, produces an image of itself, which theologians call a 'word,' so God also, insofar as human can be compared to Divine, knowing Himself, generates the Eternal Word" (Roman Catechism, III, 9). Thus the generation of the Son from the Father is to be conceived purely as an intellectual generation or as an act of the Divine Intellect.

This does not mean that there was a time that the Son did not exist. As with the Father, the Son has always existed. The Catholic Prayer, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end," expresses this thought perfectly. Begetting does not mean that the Father creates the Son. This is a way of expressing the relationship between the Father and the Son.

One way of explaining the relationships in the Trinity is that God the Father has an infinite intellect, which can be satisfied only by an infinite object, which is his divine nature. He contemplates his infinite nature in a single infinite and perfect thought. This perfect, infinite divine thought mysteriously is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Father's Son. The Second Person is sort of like the Father's self-image, his mirror reflection. We can mentally step outside ourselves and in a sense see ourselves. This pattern of reflexive attitudes that

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we have of our own person is called the self by psychologists. The Father's reflection of himself, his image, is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Our image of ourselves is very imperfect and finite; God's image of himself is perfect and infinite. This is what we mean when we say that the Father begets the Son.

Another way to explain how the Father begets the Son is that the Son is the Word of the Father. It is the Word that St. John refers to at the beginning of his Gospel. Within the Divinity, the Father speaks one Word, but that Word is not just a vibration in the air such as we speak, rapidly passing, rather, it is substantial, it has permanence. Furthermore, our words never fully express us. God being infinite that one Word fully expresses the Father. This is why the Son Himself says in Matthew 11:27: "No one knows the Father but the Son, and no one knows the Son but the Father."

In a different perspective, a Word expresses the knowledge of the intellect. So we could say the Son proceeds by way of intellect. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit proceeds by way of love. So there are, as it were, infinite streams of knowledge and love within the Holy Trinity.

To summarize what we have said about the Son, Jesus Christ is the Son of the God the Father. He is known as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The name Jesus means in Hebrew: "God saves", for "He will save his people from their sins." The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah or Greek *Christos*, which means "anointed." God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with "the Holy Spirit and with power." In Israel those consecrated to God for a mission he gave were anointed in His name. This was the case for kings, priests, and sometimes prophets. The Nicene Creed that we profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass states that Jesus is "the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, one in being with the Father." Essentially this means that the Son is equal to the Father, because he possesses the same nature, the same essence, and the same substance of which the Father is made. Jesus is the mirror image of the Father and the Father's Word. He is generated by the Father. We have taken this about as far as we can by human reason. This is a mystery of the Faith and we accept it as true, because it has been revealed by God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Since the Word originates from and is generated by the Father, it is appropriate that he be called the Father's Son. Generation has traditionally been considered a masculine operation. The Nicene Creed that we profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass describes the relationship between the Father and the Son where it states: I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial (one in Being with the Father). The Creed makes perfectly clear that Jesus Christ is God the Father's son and that he was generated or begotten of the Father. It also states that the Son is "consubstantial" (one in being with the Father), which means that he possesses the same nature as the Father. By nature is meant that which makes something what it is and not something else. Both share the same divine spirit, omniscient intellect, omnipotent will, and consciousness. Since the Son is consubstantial (of the same substance) with the Father and possesses the same nature as his, he is co-equal and co-eternal to the Father; he is truly God himself. He is equal to the Father, because the Father communicates his entire being or existence to his Son; consequently, they each fully share the same divine nature.

The Son is co-eternal with the Father, because there never was a time that the Father did not speak his Word

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or possess the image of himself; therefore, there never was a time that the Son did not exist. Some have argued that the Son cannot be equal to the Father, because he is generated by the Father; therefore, the Son did not always exist. This is thinking of God only in human terms. God lives in the eternal present; he lives outside of time and space, and as we have discussed there has never been a time that he did not exist. It is always now for God. This is just as true of the Son as the Father, because there was never a time that the Father did not have an image of himself or speak his Word. So the Son has always existed for all eternity with the Father.

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father, not created. From all eternity, the procession of the Son, the process of generation from the Father is on-going. There never was a time the procession did not occur: it occurred in the past, it is occurring now, and it will occur forever. In other words, just as the Son possesses all of the being of the Father and is, thus, equal to the Father, the Son is co-eternal with the Father, because there never was a time that the Son did not exist. This is why we 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, world without end. Amen."

Jesus explains the meaning of "one in being with the Father" in his Last Supper discourse to his disciples in response to Philip's question, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied", when he said, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:9-11).

To briefly summarize the relationships among the persons of the Holy Trinity: God the Holy Trinity consists of three Divine Persons. The Father, the first Person, knows himself completely. The act of knowing himself produces an Idea, which is a perfect image of himself called the Word in St John's gospel. St Paul says that, the Son "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Another way of looking at this matter is the Father speaks a single Word that contains all of the knowledge possible. Since he communicates his entire being to his Word, the Word somehow constitutes a separate Person. The Word then is the Second Person of the Trinitarian Family. The First and Second Persons combine in an act of perfect love for one another that constitutes a Third Person, the Holy Spirit. Together they make up the Trinitarian Family of God. In other words, "God as thinker is the First Person of the Holy Trinity, God as Thought is the Second Person, and God as love is the Third Person." The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. Because they are of the same substance or being, the three persons of the Holy Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal. By using the phraseology, the Council of Nicaea the "Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages", it was making sure there was no misunderstanding that the Son had existed for all eternity and was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

Salvation history prepares the way for the Incarnation

To begin, let's examine what we mean by salvation history. Catholicism is an historical religion. In general,

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salvation history is the story (or history) of the creation, fall, and redemption of humankind. These events are history; they are events that really happened. They are not myths, folklore, legends, or fables. The Old and New Testaments describe events that occurred as surely as did any other great historical events. We probably know more about Jesus Christ from an historical perspective than we do about most historical figures. Jesus is not some mystical figure enshrouded in myth, folklore, legend, or fables, but a man who was conceived, born, lived, and died as all other human beings have and will do. The Church teaches that he is like us in all things but sin. In fact, he still lives today in Heaven and on earth in his Church. Knowledge of Salvation History is essential to our understanding of the Faith and for its defense. John Henry Cardinal Newman once wrote something to the effect that one couldn't become immersed in a study of history and not come to believe that the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Jesus Christ. That is largely how he found his way to the Catholic Church from the Anglican Church in the mid 1800's.

To begin the process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family after the Fall, God made covenants or agreements with a chosen people. A covenant is a kinship agreement; it creates a family bond. Love is the bond that makes and holds covenant relationships together. Testament is another word for covenant. The Old and new Testaments tell the story of God's revelation and his agreements with mankind.
The Old Testament (Covenant)

The Old Covenant is the Old Testament found in our Bible. The Old Testament tells the story of the Creation, Fall, and the beginnings of the Redemption of mankind. The redemption of mankind occurred in stages. God started the redemption by making covenants with a couple (Adam and Eve); then a family (Noah and his family); then a tribe (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their children); then a nation (Moses and the Israelites); then a kingdom (David and his kingdom); and finally the entire human race was included in the New and Everlasting Covenant (Jesus and the People of God, the Catholic Church). Each covenant progressively added more peoples to God's family over the centuries. Although the various covenants of the Old Testament had somewhat different provisions, basically God promised to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments.

The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this tiresome repeating cycle (speaking analogically and anthropologically, of course, since God does not tire) and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

Whereas the Old Testament (or Covenant) tells the story of the Creation, Fall, and preparation for the redemption of humankind, the New Testament tells the story of the redemption itself. As St. Augustine said, the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. The New does not replace the Old, but fulfills it. The Old Testament contains hundreds of prefigurations or

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foreshadowings that hint of much greater things to come in the New Testament. For example, the Paschal Lamb of the Israelites of the Old Testament prefigures the “Lamb of God”, our Lord Jesus Christ, of the New Testament, the New and Everlasting Covenant.

The New and Everlasting Covenant (Testament)

God brought salvation to the world only when his dearly beloved son, Jesus Christ, instituted the New and Everlasting Covenant (the New Testament). This covenant will last forever, because it is sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, the Blood of Jesus Christ himself, who is the Word made incarnate. The covenant of the Old Testament was sealed with the blood of animals; the covenant of the New Testament is sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ. God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that humankind could keep its end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a new and everlasting covenant on its behalf. The New and Everlasting Covenant (the Covenant of Love), sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and represented at each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere in the Gospel.

The Incarnation

Next to the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation is the most important doctrine of the Catholic Faith. The Incarnation occurred when the Word became Flesh and dwelled among us. The prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled hundreds of years afterwards when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would save the world (Matthew 1:20-25, Luke 1:26-37). At her consent, the Word (the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) was made Flesh and dwelled among us (Luke 1:26-38); in other words, the Word became incarnate (from the Latin *incarnare*, which means to make flesh).

St. John begins his Gospel with the words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:1-2; 14). John is here talking about the Incarnation, which means to embody or be made of flesh. At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. He is true God and true man. It is very important to stress here that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine spirit, including his intellect, will, and consciousness with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy Trinity had separate intellects, wills, and consciousness’s there would exist three separate gods, not one. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10) or “I came from the father” (John 15:28) or “[He] who

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sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).

To say this in more exact theological words, theologians define the Incarnation as “the operation by which God elevated to himself a determinate human nature, formed in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mother, in order to make it subsist in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.” Fr. Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that:

[Subsistence is the] existence proper to a whole and uncommunicated substance or reality. Subsistence is that perfection whereby a nature is completed and becomes uncommunicated, that is, whereby it becomes itself and distinct from all other beings. Something, therefore, subsists when it has being and operation through itself, not through union with another. Applied to God as the being who exists essentially or by identity within his essence; the being who is completely self-sufficient for existence and activity.

Thus during the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity becomes Jesus Christ. His human nature consists of a body and soul with the faculties of intellect and will, which is “complete and perfect in every respect”. Instead of subsisting in a human person as do all other human natures, his human nature subsisted in a divine Person, the Son. At the same time “the Son's divine nature was in no way changed or diminished”. In Jesus Christ, a human nature exists that did not exist before and it subsists in a divine Person. However, there is no change in the divine Person. Thus Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man, one Divine Person with two natures, human and divine.

In addition to his divine Person, who possesses the divine spirit with infinite intellect and will, Jesus possesses a human soul with human intellect, free will, imagination, affections, and memory. In his humanity, Jesus is like us in all things but sin. Although he is perfectly holy and virtuous, in order to fully share in our humanity he allowed himself to suffer from many of the consequences of Original Sin. He suffered from no desire or inclination to sin (concupiscence), but he emptied himself and subjected himself to the effects of sin: exhaustion, hunger, thirst, suffering, sorrow, and even death (Philippians 2:6-8). He even underwent temptation to better understand how we feel when being tempted (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:2). When he died he separated his human soul from his body and descended to the dead, the limbo of the Fathers, the Bosom of Abraham. At his Resurrection, he reunited his soul with a Glorified Body, which is no longer subject to the limitations of time and space and possesses the qualities of impassability, which means he is free from suffering, sorrow, or death; subtlety, which means that his spiritual nature shines through and is not hidden in his body; agility, which means that his soul commands his body to move with great ease and speed; and clarity, which means that his body is free of any deformities caused by his passion, except that he will display the wounds in his hands, feet, and side forever as a reminder to us in Heaven of what he did for us. Jesus defeated death not only for himself, but for us as well (John 11:25-26). We who remain faithful to him to the end will also overcome death and possess the same qualities of the Glorified Body as he does, and I might add, as does his Blessed Mother and ours, the Virgin Mary.

The Incarnation was the most important event that ever occurred in history, because every event before was affected by it and every event that followed until the end of time was or will be affected by it. In fact, we even ascertain our time from the birth of Jesus Christ: before Christ, B.C., and *Anno Domini*, A.D. (in the Year of

our Lord). The Incarnation was so important, because it raised the dignity and worth of every single human being. Being created in God's very image had already given humans inestimable dignity and worth; the Incarnation even raised this dignity and worth even further yet, because God himself had become a human, making it possible for all humans to elevate their status to the supernatural level, of course, by adoption and by grace, not by nature. Because God created us in his image and likeness it gives us the motive for loving and caring for others. In fact, Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loves us (John 15:12), which is a tall order. It is much greater order than loving our neighbor as ourselves, because our capacity to love others depends on the degree to which we love ourselves. An added reason for loving others is the Redemption of humankind, because God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son into the world to redeem it (John 3:16). Moreover, the Incarnation increases our worth and dignity even further yet by restoring us to God's family.

Nonetheless, the Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's likeness. We are made friends with him once again only at Baptism, whether of water, blood, or desire. The restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin. Baptism makes us right with God as our Protestant brothers and sisters would say. Before Baptism we were dead to sin. At Baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6). Also, Baptism makes us holy, because God the Trinity, who is holiness itself, comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23).

The intellect of Jesus Christ: Some theologians and Scripture scholars have said over the past few centuries that Jesus was ignorant of many things. They like to point to St Luke where he says that after Jesus was found in the Temple, after having been lost for three days, he “increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:41-52). Doesn't this indicate that he didn't know all things at first, but had to learn them by experience? This and other verses has been used by certain scripture scholars who argue that Jesus didn't know all things. On the other hand, one could argue the very opposite from the passages before this that he was aware he was in his Father's house.

Even though Jesus is a divine Person, in his humanity (his human nature) he is like us in all things but sin, for a divine Person cannot sin. In his humanity he could learn by experience and through the senses as all we humans learn things. Of course, in his divinity he knows all things, but in his human nature, he learned things he already knew in his divine intellect. For example, when Jesus learned to be a carpenter from his foster father St. Joseph, he was learning in his humanity what he already knew in his divinity. In regard to his human intellect, the *Catechism* says “This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, ‘increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man’, and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking ‘the form of a slave’” The *Catechism* states further in this regard that “Jesus had both divine nature and human nature but ‘he emptied himself’ of the glory of his divine nature (No. 472). The *Navarre Bible Commentary* explains: “Christ did not shed his divine nature; he simply shed its glory, its aura; if he had not done so it would have shown through his human nature . . . Christ could not cease to be God, but he could temporarily renounce the exercise of rights that belonged to him as God—which is what he did.”

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Nonetheless, it is blatantly false that Jesus was ignorant of his divinity and other matters, because being a divine Person, Jesus possessed infinite divine knowledge at all times; therefore, he could not have been ignorant of anything. Jesus Christ is a Divine Person and a Divine Person must know everything. Even in his human intellect, from the time of his conception he saw God face-to-face, the Beatific Vision. During his entire life on earth, Jesus knew all things “by virtue of His immediate and uninterrupted vision of God.” Not only did he possess a direct vision of God at all times, but he “also possessed infused knowledge of all created things.” Since he is like us in all things but sin, for a divine Person cannot sin, in his humanity he could learn by experience and through the senses as all we humans learn things. Of course, in his divinity he knows all things, but in his human nature, he learned things he already knew in his divine intellect.

The will of Jesus Christ: In regard to his human will, the *Catechism* says “Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation. Christ’s human will ‘does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will.’” (No. 475). This explains why Jesus’ will was never other than that of the Father’s in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share in the same intellect and will, because they constitute only one God, not three; one God in three persons.

Although he is a divine person, who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit, Jesus always played a subordinate role to his Father in his humanity. In his divinity Jesus is of the same nature as God the Father and as a result co-equal and co-eternal to him, but in his humanity he always played a subordinate role to his Father. In his humanity, Jesus is like us in all things but sin. He is perfectly holy and virtuous in every way, and suffered from no desire or inclination to sin (concupiscence). Although Jesus did not deserve to experience the consequences of Original Sin that all human beings must undergo, in order to fully share in our humanity he “emptied himself” and subjected himself to many of the consequences of Original Sin: exhaustion, hunger, thirst, suffering, sorrow, and even death, “death on a Cross” (Philippians 2:6-8). He even underwent temptation to better understand how we feel when being tempted (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:2). Because Jesus is fully human, he possessed a human nervous system and human senses; consequently, he could suffer and feel emotions just like us. In fact, theologians tell us that Jesus was created with a human nature, “extraordinarily sensitive to suffering since this was the method chosen for our Redemption”. It is said that when he did feel emotions, “they were always directed toward a proper object and always totally in harmony with His intellect and will.” Moreover, since the divine Person Jesus Christ is both God and Man, it is totally correct to say that “God suffered, God died, God was hungry, God was sorrowful. It is also correct to say that a Man rose from the dead, a Man worked miracles, a Man offered a perfect sacrifice to the Father, a Man sits at the right hand of the Father, a Man will come to judge the living and the dead”. We will return to the topic of Jesus’ death below.

Why Jesus Christ became man

Jesus became a man to:

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- Restore us to God's Family;
- Elevate our human nature so we can share in his divinity;
- Redeem us by suffering and dying on the Cross;
- Suffer and die for our sins;
- Show how much he loves us;
- Give us hope;
- Set for us an example of perfect holiness and virtue;
- Help us reach perfection;
- Give us an example and motive for loving others.

Why Jesus Christ is God

The Church teaches that Jesus Christ is God. We know that Jesus is God because He did things while on earth that only God can do, such as:

- He was a model of holiness and perfect virtue;
- He forgave sins;
- He changed or modified God's laws;
- He made prophecies that came true, such as foretelling the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and of His suffering, death, and resurrection;
- He performed great miracles, such as healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, curing the crippled, driving out demons, raising the dead to life, calming the sea, walking on water, and multiplying the loaves and fishes to feed the hungry crowds.
- Above all, he rose from the dead under his own power.

The foundation for the social doctrines of the Catholic Church derive from the last reason. His death paid for all of the damage caused by our sins, original and actual. His incarnation gives the human race a role in its own salvation, because Jesus is a human being, who represents us as well as being God. We can participate in our salvation by picking up our crosses daily and uniting our suffering with his, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

First and foremost Jesus told us that he is God. He revealed that he was the Messiah and God's Son only gradually. Several of the occasions recorded in the Bible are as follows:

- When the Magi came into the house and worshipped the baby Jesus. Worship is something reserved for God only. (Matthew 2:11)
- When the shepherds paid him homage. (Luke 2:8-20)
- When he was found after having been lost in the Temple for three days he said, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:45-52)

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- When in the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:13-20). In other words, Jesus acknowledged this to be true.
- At Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptism at the River Jordan: “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased’” (Luke 3:21-22).
- At the Transfiguration when God the Father said, “‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe” (Matthew 17:1-8).
- During the Feast of the Tabernacles that Jesus began to speak more openly and forcefully about whom he was. He began to refer to himself as the “Living Water” (John 7:37-38) and the “Light of the World” (John 8:12), and claiming that he was greater than their father Abraham. After a particularly intense debate with the Scribes and Pharisees in the Temple, Jesus said to them: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple (John 58-59). The Jews, that is those Jews who were his enemies, knew perfectly well that Jesus was claiming to be God when he referred to himself as “I AM”, the name with which God had identified himself to Moses in the Burning Bush (Genesis 3).
- Once in the Temple after the Scribes and the Pharisees had brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in adultery, a conversation erupted between him and them when Jesus said “‘I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me.’ They said to him therefore, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.” Then when the conversation turned to Abraham, Jesus said ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.’ The Jews then said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple” (John 8). Again, the Jews knew that Jesus was claiming to be God and sought to kill him.
- During the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem when Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him said “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal

life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone him (John 10: 22-40).

- When Jesus delivered his farewell address to his Apostles at the Last Supper, he told them that he was the way, the truth, and the life and that he and the Father were one; that if one sees him they see the Father; that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. In other words, Jesus was clearly telling them he is God (John 14).
- In response to Thomas' doubt of his resurrection, Jesus said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:27-29)
- After his arrest, Jesus was questioned at the palace of the high priest, Joseph Caiaphas. There he was falsely accused and mistreated by the Jews (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22). The chief priests and the whole council tried to get false testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death, but they could find none, although many false witnesses had come forward. Eventually two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'" In response the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy" (Matthew 26:62-65). In the early morning hours Jesus was taken to the temple area where he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin.
- Jesus accepted worship prior to his ascension. "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted" (Matthew 28:16-17).
- St Paul said that. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. . . . For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 1:15-16; 2:9). Also, Paul in Titus 2:13-14 refers to Jesus as "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us. . ."
- St John tells us in Revelation 5:13-14 that Jesus will be worshiped by every creature in heaven: "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

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We also know that Jesus Christ is God, because he did things while on earth that only God can do by the following:

- Displaying every attribute of deity, including: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, and immutability;
- Unrivaled teaching and divine understanding of people;
- Being a model of holiness and perfect virtue;
- Forgiving sins, a power possessed only by God. When he forgave the paralytic before he cured him early in his public ministry in Galilee, it made the local Pharisees suspicious of him, because they suspected him of blasphemy (Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 9:2).
- Changing or modifying God's laws. For example, when Jesus told the Pharisees that the "Son of Man is master of the Sabbath," he was claiming the power to make the law, something only God can do (Matthew 12:8). This claim got him into more trouble than any of his other claims;
- Claiming to judge was another matter that continually got Jesus into trouble with the Pharisees. He claimed the right to judge all men on his own authority, a power possessed only by God (Matthew 25:31-41).
- Making prophecies that came true, such as foretelling the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-2) and of his suffering, death, and resurrection (Luke 9:18-22; Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:1-9); only God knows the future.
- Performing great miracles, such as healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and hearing to the Deaf, curing the crippled, driving out demons, raising the dead to life, calming the sea, walking on water, and multiplying the loaves and fishes to feed the hungry crowds. Only God can change the laws of nature. And above all;
- Rising from the dead under his own power.

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father

This section of the Creed was, without a doubt, the most highly debated of all in the early Church. At the time, there were many theologians proposing different ideas concerning Jesus and his relationship to the Father. As we discussed above, some said Jesus was only a human person with special gifts given to him by God; they denied the belief that he was truly God. The Arians claimed that Jesus was subordinate to God the Father—that he was a created being like us. The Council of Nicaea (325) would ultimately define the Church’s teaching on this matter by saying that Jesus was not created, but rather existed from all eternity with God the Father. There was never a time when Jesus, the Son of God, did not exist. Thus we proclaim that he was begotten or generated, not made.

What does it mean that the son was “begotten”? When a man and a woman have a child, the child shares in the similarities of its parents. However, the child is a separate, independent being; it has its own unique nature. It is different with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He was not just similar to the Father; He was consubstantial or one in being with him. Notice the change in the creed, which says Jesus is “consubstantial” with the Father. This means that the son same substance or nature with the Father. Begotten means bringing forth something of the same nature or substance.

The son is the perfect image of the Father, because the Father mysteriously communicates his entire being to his son. The Church uses the language, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God to show that Jesus is the “perfect” image of the Father, i.e., is of the same divine nature. This might seem a bit redundant, but the Council of Nicaea was making triply certain that it was understood that the Son had always existed and was the natural son of the Father, not a created being as the Arians had been claiming. Arius had claimed that “The Logos is not eternal. God begat Him and before He was begotten, He did not exist.” Saint Athanasius’ reply was “The begetting of the Logos was not an event in time, but an eternal relationship.”

The battle lines were drawn over two Greek words: *homoousion* which is translated “consubstantial” or “one in being” with the Father; and *homoioousion* which is translated “a similar substance with the Father” or “a like substance with the Father.” The Greek letter I is *iota*, so there seemingly is only one *iota* of difference between the two words; however, the choice between these two words makes all the difference in establishing the true meaning of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The son being “consubstantial” or “one in being” with the Father means that he is of the same substance or being with the Father, that they share the same nature for all eternity, and that the son is his father’s natural son, not a created being. Being the Father’s natural son—i.e., be-gotten or generated by the Father—he is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. The council declared that the son is of the same substance or being as the Father, not just similar in substance or being with the Father.

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For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

Now that we have completed discussing what is meant by salvation, let's go on to the phrase of the Creed that states: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

The prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled hundreds of years later when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would save the world. At her consent, she was conceived by the Holy Spirit and the Word (the second Person of the Holy Trinity) became Flesh and dwelled among us (the Incarnation).

As Saint Luke tells this story:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be, since I have no husband?' And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. (Luke 1: 26-34).



Although Mary had wondered how this could be since she had no husband, she trusted in God and consented by saying "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38). And the angel left her.

Of the event described by St. Luke, the *Catechism* says: "God sent forth his Son', but to prepare a body for him, he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, 'a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life" (No. 488).

Why it was necessary that Jesus have a human mother: God the Father desired that his son have a human mother so that the son would be human like us in all things but sin. Jesus could not have been fully

human without a human mother. Having a human mother makes Jesus truly our brother, fully united with us. Jesus did not have a human father, because it was the Father's plan that he be Jesus' only father. The *Catechism* says of this matter, "Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. 'He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures'" (No.503).

Since Mary plays such an important role in the Catholic Faith, and so much of that role is misunderstood by Catholics and those not of our Faith as well, it would be profitable to discuss some of the more important Marian doctrines here. First let's examine the doctrine of Mary's divine motherhood. Since Jesus Christ is God, and Mary is his mother, isn't she the mother of God?

The Virgin Mary's divine motherhood: Mary is truly the Mother of God. She rounds out the Trinitarian Family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by performing the role of mother. Mary has a threefold relationship to the Trinity: she is the daughter of the Father; mother of the Son; and spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is, of course, merely human like us, but she is full of God's grace (Hail Mary, full of grace) and she is the mother of Jesus Christ the Second Person of the Holy Trinity made man. In Greek she is called *Theotokos* or God-bearer. The *Catechism* says of Mary's motherhood, "Mary is truly 'Mother of God' since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself" (No. 509). Since she is only a creature, we venerate her, but do not worship her, an honor reserved only for God. She leads us to Jesus so he, in turn, can lead us to the Father. Moreover, because she is mother to Jesus, it is logical that she be mother to all of his brothers and sisters, God's entire covenant family, which is his Church.

Mary's spiritual motherhood to us all: Mary is not only the Mother of God, Jesus Christ, but she is also our spiritual mother. In this regard, St. John says in his gospel, "But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (John 19:25-27). The Church teaches that it was at that moment Jesus made his mother the spiritual mother of us all.

Mary as Mother of the Church: Since Mary is mother to Jesus' brothers and sisters who make up God's covenant family—the Church, it seems logical that she is also Mother of the Church, which is his Mystical Body consisting of him as head and us as members. Regarding this matter the *Catechism* states, "The Virgin Mary . . . is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer . . . he is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ' . . . since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head. Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church" (No. 963).

Mary's perpetual virginity: The Creed says that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary who remained a virgin even after Jesus was born, which is the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. Some scripture scholars and theologians have speculated that Mary did not remain a virgin, because the Bible makes reference to the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Of this assertion the *Catechism* states:

Against this doctrine [of Mary's perpetual virginity] the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. [Cf. Mk 3:31-35; Mk 6:3; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19.] The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, 'brothers of Jesus', are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls 'the other Mary.' [Mt 13:55; Mt 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56.] They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression" (No. 500).

In the Palestine of Jesus' time it was customary to consider cousins as brothers and sisters; in fact the Jews had no word for cousins. Moreover, it would have been an insult to his family if Jesus had had brothers when at the foot of the Cross he gave his mother Mary to John as his mother to care for. If Mary had other sons it would have been their responsibility to look after her after Jesus was dead, not someone outside the family.

The Immaculate Conception: Perhaps the best known of the Marian doctrines is the Immaculate Conception. In order for Mary to be worthy to become the Mother of God, she had to be as perfect a human being as God had ever created; she had to be free not only of actual sin, but of Original Sin as well. Of this fact the *Catechism* says, "From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. 'Full of grace', Mary is 'the most excellent fruit of redemption': from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life" (No. 508).



Being infinitely powerful, Jesus Christ applied the merits of his sacrifice on the Cross to his mother in advance at her conception by keeping her free of the stain of Original Sin. This doctrine of the Catholic Church is called the Immaculate Conception. The *Catechism* says of this event, "To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role. The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as 'full of grace'. In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace" (No. 490). Elsewhere the *Catechism* tells us, "Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin" (No. 491).

Mary full of grace: The Archangel Gabriel hailed Our Lady as "full of grace". That meant that, "she had the maximum capacity of grace or the life of God in her soul at that moment. But since that vision is infinite, there was still room for indefinite increases even in one who is full of grace at the start. I've heard that we might compare her growth to that of a geometric scale in which each number is multiplied by itself, e.g., $2 \times 2 = 4$; $4 \times 4 = 16$; $8 \times 8 = 64$, and so on into infinity. This is sometimes called exponential growth. Pius IX in defining the Immaculate Conception said of her holiness, which in practice means the same as love of God, that even at the start it was so great that 'none greater under God can be thought of, and no one but God can

comprehend it.' Not even the highest angels are capable of comprehending her holiness; only God Himself can comprehend it! In fact, she was so holy that she positively willed that he die, since it was the will of the Father. The holy soul must always fully will what God wills no matter how difficult or painful this is. Mary was not only free from Original and actual sin, but she was so perfect that she possessed no imperfections. Imperfections involve being faced with two or more good choices, but one choice is better than the others. One is imperfect when they fail to make the best choice. Mary was so full of God's grace that she never failed to make the best choice. She is perfect because God made her that way, she is full of grace.



The Assumption of Mary into Heaven: The *Catechism* tells us that “The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body” (No. 974). In 1950, Pope Pius XII raised the ancient teaching of the Church that Mary was taken up to Heaven body and soul to the level of a Dogma, which is the perfection of a doctrine.

Did Mary die?: Some have believed that she never died, but there is a strong tradition that she died either in Jerusalem or Ephesus in the year 49 A.D. Pope Pius did not address that issue in his encyclical, probably because there existed no conclusive answer. I am of the opinion that she died, because Jesus himself too was perfect, and he suffered and died anyway. Moreover, Jesus wanted his mother to share in his redemption to the fullest extent possible, and the best way to do this was to suffer and die as he did. She suffered so much because of her son that one of her titles is Our Lady of Sorrows. Tradition has it that St. Thomas returned from India and St. Jude from Edessa for the event. In either case, she would have been taken up to Heaven soon afterwards.

Although she was perfect and didn't deserve to suffer or die, Mary still suffered much because of her son, so much so that as I just said one of her titles is “Our Lady of Sorrows.” Mary stood by her son's cross, where she was overwhelmed with grief at seeing him die an agonizing death by crucifixion. The Church has identified seven sorrows that she endured because of her son during her lifetime:

1. The prophecy of Holy Simeon.
2. The flight into Egypt.
3. The loss of the Child Jesus for three days.
4. The meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary.
5. The crucifixion and death of Jesus.
6. When Jesus taken down from the Cross.
7. When Jesus laid in the tomb.



Each of these sorrows is depicted in stain glass in our church here at St. Patrick's. To these sorrows we might

add the sorrow caused by the constant rejection of her son during his public ministry.



Mary's Coronation: Mary was crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth and sits beside the throne of her son Jesus who is King of Heaven and Earth. The *Catechism* says of Mary's coronation, "Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death" (No. 966). Mary's queenship is as mother of the king or Queen Mother rather than the wife of the King. The ancient custom was for the mother of the king to perform the role of queen mother rather than his chief wife. For example, Solomon's queen was his mother, Bathsheba, and not one of his many wives. The queen mother was a powerful intercessor for those seeking the mercy or favor of the king just as the Blessed Mother is a powerful intercessor for us before the throne of God. Mary's role as intercessor is known as the doctrine of Advocate.

The Marian doctrine of Advocate: Mary is the Mother of Mankind and our Advocate before the Throne of God. The famous prayer of St. Bernard, the *Memorare*, perfectly summarizes the meaning of Mary's role as Advocate:

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 with this confidence, I fly to you, O virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Just as we must go through the son to reach the Father, we must go through the mother to reach the son. She intercedes for us in her role as Queen Mother. Just as we reach Mary through Jesus, Jesus distributes all of his graces through Mary. In this role she is called the Mediatrix of all Graces.

Marian doctrine of Mediatrix of all graces: Jesus administers his graces and mercy through his mother, the Mediatrix of all Graces. Of this role of Mary's mediation, the *Catechism* states, "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation . . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church

under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix” (No. 969). Because of her role in the redemption of mankind, and because she is his true mother and our spiritual mother, God casts her in the role of Mediatrix. However, her role as mediator depends on the mediation of Christ, for her son is the only Mediator between God and man, and he needs no help in this role. Her mediation is contained and exercised in his mediation. Of this matter the *Catechism* states, “Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it.’ No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold co-operation which is but a sharing in this one source” (No. 970).

Marian doctrine of Coredemptrix: Mary suffered terribly when her son suffered and died in the Cross, perhaps even to the point of almost dying herself. Because it was the Father’s plan to redeem the human race by his son’s death, she united her suffering to that of her son’s and offered their suffering as a sacrifice to appease the justice of the Father. For that reason, it deservedly has been said of her that she redeemed the human race along with her son Jesus. The proper term for this is coredemptrix. This does not mean that her role in the redemption was equal to his, but that she performed her role with his. Jesus is the one redeemer. His sacrifice lacked nothing. No one could add anything to the infinite value of his sacrifice. Nonetheless, he wanted his mother to share in the redemption of the human race, because it was she who made it possible for him to unite with sinful man and to redeem him.

Marian doctrine of the New Eve: The *Catechism* says of the New Eve, “After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall. This passage in Genesis is called the Protoevangelium (“first gospel”): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers” (No. 410). The *Catechism* is here referring to Genesis 3:14-15. The *Catechism* continues by saying, “The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the ‘New Adam’ [Jesus Christ] who, because he ‘became obedient unto death, even death on a cross,’ makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience of Adam. Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the Protoevangelium as Mary, the mother of Christ, the ‘new Eve.’ Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life” (No. 411). What Adam and Eve lost for the human race by their disobedience, Jesus and Mary regained by their obedience; thus they are the New Adam and new Eve.

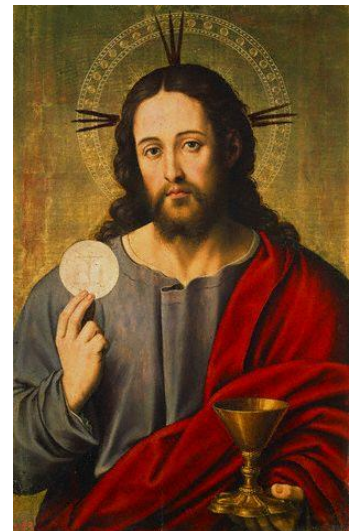
Marian doctrine of the Ark of the Covenant: The Church has said from the beginning that Moses’ Ark of the Covenant foreshadows the Blessed Virgin Mary who is the New Ark of the New and Everlasting Covenant. The Ark was a box that was several feet in dimension that was made of acacia wood and was covered both inside and out with the purest gold. At the four corners golden rings were placed through which gilded poles were passed, enabling the Ark to be carried. On the lid at the top were statues of two golden Cherubim or angels. The Ark contained three items: the stone tablets on which was written the Ten Com-

mandments; a golden pot of manna, the bread provided by God to the Israelites during their forty years in the wilderness; and Aaron's budding rod, a symbol of his right to the office of High Priest. Whereas Moses' Ark contained the Word of God in stone, the New Ark—the womb of Mary—contained the Word of God incarnate. Whereas Moses' Ark contained the manna bread for nourishment of the body, the New Ark contained the Word Incarnate to provide the “Bread of Life” to nourish the soul. Whereas Aaron's rod symbolized his right to the office of the High Priesthood under the Old Covenant, the New Ark contains Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New and Everlasting Covenant.

The roles of Jesus Christ as Priest, Prophet, and King

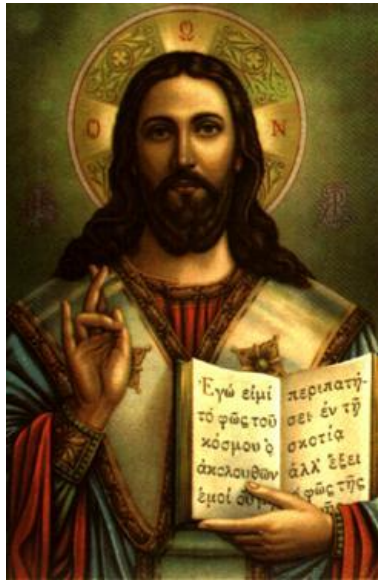
In Israel, those consecrated to God for a special mission were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, priests, and sometimes prophets. The Messiah is another title for the Christ, “the Anointed One.” He was to be a, priest, prophet and king (Deuteronomy 18:15; Psalms 110:4; Isaiah 9:6-7). The prophets taught that asking the Messiah “would come to rule all nations, that as a priest he would redeem the world, and that as a prophet he would teach and instruct all peoples.” The Hebrew people had believed that the Messiah was to be an earthly king who would save them from their enemies and establish a kingdom that would rule over the world. This has been called the “Conquering King” Messiah. A less well-known version of the messiah at the time of Jesus was the “Suffering Servant” Messiah that Isaiah tells us so much about.

Jesus Christ as Priest: Sacrifice and priesthood go together; if there is no sacrifice, there is no priesthood. For a sacrifice to occur there must be present a priest to offer the sacrifice, a victim in which to offer, and an altar on which to offer the victim. Sacrifice means to give up something of value: time, talents, material goods, even the ultimate sacrifice, one's life for the love of God. That which is given up is the victim. Not only must it be given up, it must be destroyed or used up. For instance, when one sacrifices time for others, he gives up his time, in effect, he destroys it for use himself. When one gives up material possessions for the benefit of others, he denies himself the use of them. To sacrifice things in the religious sense means to offer them up to God; to give them back to him. They can be given back to God, sacrificed that is, in thanks, praise, contrition, appeasement, etc.



The supreme sacrifice was, of course, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross for the salvation of the world. Jesus was both the High Priest offering the sacrifice and the victim, giving up his life on the altar of Calvary for the benefit of others. The Mass literally makes present Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the Cross. The Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice as that which Jesus made on the Cross to satisfy the needs of mankind for sacrifice and as the means with which the fruits of the Redemption might be applied to people for the remission of their sins. Saying that the Mass represents Christ's sacrifice on the Cross does not mean that Christ dies at every Mass as some falsely believe, but it means, instead, that the one time Jesus suffered and died on the Cross is made present at the consecration so that all of the congregation can participate in the

event that earned for them their salvation. Jesus is the High Priest of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, but he is represented at the altar by his ordained ministerial priesthood in his person (*in persona Christi capitis*).



Jesus Christ as Prophet: The Biblical term prophet means, “one who spoke, acted, or wrote under the extraordinary influence of God to make known the divine counsels and will.” In other words a prophet is one who proclaims the word of God. However, we usually associate a prophet as one who foretells the future, and so he does. In addition to proclaiming God's word and foretelling future events, prophets also perform the role of encouraging God's people when they are discouraged and warning them if they have broken their covenant with him. Nevertheless, much of a prophet's role is revealing to the people what will happen to them if they do not repent and do penance for their transgressions. Jesus Christ, the Messiah in person, who was long foretold and awaited as a Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Isaiah 49; etc.), accepted the title and fulfilled the role completely. It has been said that “His preaching and His predictions are much closer to the prophetic models than are the teachings of the rabbis. His great predecessors are

as far below Him as the servants are below the only Son. Unlike them He does not receive from without the truth which He preaches. Its source is within Him. He promulgates it with an authority thereunto unknown. His revelation is the definite message of the Father. To understand its meaning more and more clearly the Church which He is about to establish will have throughout all ages the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost.” Jesus fulfills the prophetic role by proclaiming the Gospel throughout Galilee and Judea, by making prophecies that came true, by bringing hope and comfort to the poor and downtrodden, and by warning people to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7).

Jesus Christ as King: Christ the King is one of Jesus' titles found in several Scriptural passages, such as 1 Timothy 1:17; John 1:49; Matthew 27:11; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelations 19:16; 15:3; 1:5. Many Christian denominations, including Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and some Lutherans and Methodists, honor Jesus during the Feast of Christ the King. Pope Pius XI said in his encyclical *Quas Primas*, published in 1925, of Jesus' Kingship: “Christ, has dominion over all creatures, a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but his by essence and by nature.” Pope Benedict XVI remarked at his Angelus audience on Sunday, November 26, that Christ's Kingship is not based on “human power” but on loving and serving others. The perfect exemplar of that acceptance, he pointed out, is the Virgin Mary. Her humble and unconditional acceptance of God's will in her life, the Pope noted, was the reason that “God exalted her over all other creatures, and Christ crowned her Queen of heaven and earth.”



The Ordained Priesthood as Priest, Prophet, and King



Although the ordained ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ, they differ in their respective roles. The *Catechism* says of the difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the laity: "The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*)" (No. 1592).

The ordained priesthood is ministerial; i.e., a role of ordained priests is to minister to the spiritual needs of their congregations. The *Catechism* says of this matter:

That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service. It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a 'sacred power' which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him" (No. 1551).

In addition, the *Catechism* states, "the ordained priesthood is sacerdotal; that is, another role of ordained priests is to administer the sacraments as a representative of Jesus Christ. The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ—Head of the Church—before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice" (*Catechism*, No. 1552). Only the ordained priest can represent Christ, *in persona Christi*, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in his name in the confessional.

The *Catechism* nicely summarizes the role of the ordained priesthood nicely when it states: "This sacrament [of Ordination] configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king" (No. 1581).

The Laity as Priest, Prophet, and King

The *Catechism* tells us that, "The word 'Christ' comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, which means 'anointed.' It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that 'Christ' signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets" (No.

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436: Exodus 29:7; Leviticus 8:12; 1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 16:1; 12:13; 1 Kings 1:39; 19:16).

When one is baptized, he or she takes on the role of priest, prophet, and king (Revelations.5:10). The *Catechism* says of this matter: “The anointing with sacred chrism, per-fumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one ‘anointed’ by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king” (No. 1241). Moreover, one is confirmed by a Bishop as priest, prophet, and king. In this regard, the *Catechism* states, “Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them” (No. 783).



The Laity as Priest: All of us share in Jesus' priesthood in some manner. God had promised Moses as part of his Covenant with the Israelites that “you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). This priesthood has been continued in the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ with the People of God. The Priesthood of the Laity is sometimes referred to as the Priesthood of All Believers. Regarding the laity's priesthood, the *Catechism* states “Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church 'a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.' The whole community of believers is,

as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood” (No. 1546; Revelations 1:6; 5:9-10, 1 Peter 2:5-9). In another place the *Catechism* says of this matter, “On entering the People of God through faith and Baptism, one receives a share in this people's unique, priestly vocation: 'Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, has made this new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father.' The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood” (No. 784; Revelations 1:6).

The layperson can perform his or her priestly role in many ways. Simply by performing well one's vocation as husband, wife, child, worker, etc., one bears witness to the Christian Faith and performs the duties of a priest. Performing some of the many ministries open to the laity, such as catechist, server, reader, commentator, cantor, choir member, and other liturgical functions as well as various other parish ministries is another way of witnessing our faith and giving of our time and talent. Participating in social service and charitable activities is another priestly role. And let us not forget, the main activity of a priest is giving sacrifice. As long as we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of God and the benefit of others, as long as we give of our time, talent, and treasure as well as disappointments, sufferings, and sorrows in sacrifice for the love of God and neighbor, we are performing a priestly role. This is especially true when we unite our imperfect sacrifices to Christ's perfect sacrifice on the Cross at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.



The Laity as Prophet: Of the laity's prophetic role, the *Catechism* states: "The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office, above all in the supernatural sense of faith that belongs to the whole People, lay and clergy, when it 'unfailingly adheres to this faith . . . once for all delivered to the saints, and when it deepens its understanding and becomes Christ's witness in the midst of this world'" (No. 785). Remember that the role of a prophet includes not only foretelling the future, which we are unable to do, but also includes instructing the ignorant and

counseling the doubtful, encouraging the downhearted and dispirited, and warning transgressors of the consequences when they break God's commandments. These are all prophetic activities that we have ample opportunities to perform in our daily lives. For example, someone teaching CCD classes is performing a prophetic role as well as a mother homeschooling her children.

The Laity as King: The *Catechism* tells us of the laity's kingly role: "the People of God shares in the royal office of Christ. He exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself through his death and Resurrection. Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). For the Christian, 'to reign is to serve him,' particularly when serving 'the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder.' The People of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ" (No. 786).



One holy priest has said that "To be a 'King', is to live on earth with the 'dignity' of a King, with the love, joy, and peace of Jesus, that nobody and nothing can take away . . . with the 'dignity' of a child of God, the son of the multimillionaire in money, health, power . . . being envious to nobody because he has everything in his Father-God, who cares for him so much that even the hairs of his head has counted" (Matthew.10:30).

By performing our roles in a Christian manner in government, business, education, the family, and other institutions, we are playing a kingly role. By helping our pastor to administer the parish in the many ministries now available to the laity is playing a kingly role, such as serving on the parish council, board of education of the parish school, or on the finance committee. Above all, by ruling our passions to defeat the world, the flesh, and the devil, we are playing a kingly role. In all of these endeavors, we are helping Christ the King to rule, better yet, to serve the world.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,

The details of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee and Judea is discussed in detail in the section of the Contents on the homepage entitled Sacred Scripture. We begin this phrase of the Creed by starting with Jesus' passion and death.

Good Friday, Jesus' trial and conviction

Jesus was questioned, falsely accused, and mistreated by the Jewish leadership during this hour at the palace of the high priest. Peter and John, who had followed the crowd to the palace at a distance, had gained entry into the courtyard. There Peter was confronted and out of fear denied three times that he knew the Lord (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18). St. Matthew tells the story this way:

Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter followed him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." And the high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'

This was Jesus' way of answering in the affirmative. Matthew continues "Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?' They answered, 'He deserves death.'" (Matthew 26:57-66).

In the early morning hours Jesus was taken to the temple area where he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin. However, they had to get permission to carry out the sentence, because the Romans reserved the right to inflict the death penalty themselves. They had to carefully plan their strategy for this meeting, because the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, would not approve of a death sentence for blasphemy. Jesus would have to be charged with treason to get Pilate attention.

Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate was the fifth procurator of Judea, holding office from 26-36 A.D. He was not of the highest rank of Roman society, so he was appointed office to Judea, which was not a particularly important province of the Roman Empire. It was ruled by second-class citizens of the Roman elite, the order of the knights or equestrians. Knights had to be wealthy property owners and filled the senior administrative and military posts of the imperial government. According to one source, Senators also held high offices in the imperial

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government, but there was a clear division between jobs reserved for senators and those reserved for non-senatorial knights. He states, “But the career structure of both groups was broadly similar: a period of junior administrative posts in Rome or Italy, followed by a period (normally a decade) of military service as a senior army officer, followed by senior administrative or military posts in the provinces. Overall, senators and knights formed a tiny elite of under 10,000 members who monopolized political, military and economic power in an empire of [around] 60 million inhabitants.” Nonetheless, most of the top positions in the imperial administration were reserved for senators, who provided the governors of the larger provinces, except for Egypt. In the imperial administration, equestrian posts included that of the governorship of the province of Egypt, which was considered the most prestigious of all the posts open to knights, often the culmination of a long and distinguished career serving the state. In addition, knights were appointed to the governorship of some smaller provinces and sub-provinces, such as Judea where Pilate was procurator, who was subordinate to the governor of Syria.

So essentially, Pontius Pilate was a high-ranking soldier from the land owning classes. Such men were not of sufficient social rank to be appointed to the position of 'legate' or 'proconsul', but had to be contented with the military title of 'prefect'. One scholar says that the Pilate family is believed to have belonged to the equestrian order and lived in the Samnium region in central Italy. Some scholars believe that he knew and sought the advice of Joseph Caiaphas at the outset of his appointment. He must have been satisfied with Caiaphas' high priesthood, because he never changed the high priest during the entire period of his ten-year tenure of office. Pilate's term of office was marked by constant friction between him and the Jewish subjects. He must have hated his assignment out in the “boondocks” of the Empire, away from the “action” in Rome, and he was to show his hatred for the Jews in several ways. We are told that on one occasion he offended the Jews by bringing into the Holy City military banners with the image of Tiberius Caesar on them, although he should have known that any “graven image” would have offended conscientious Jews. On another occasion he angered the Jews by appropriating sums of money from the Temple treasury to finance the building of an aqueduct into Jerusalem. Moreover, he angered them when he issued coins bearing Roman cultic symbols. The Jews protested so vehemently that each provocation almost ended in a massacre. Also, Luke's Gospel refers to another confrontation Pilate had with the Jews when he “mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1).

It is important to know for our story that Pilate was often reported to Rome for his brutality, and after he had a crowd of rebellious Samaritans slaughtered on Mt Gerizim, he was eventually called to Rome in 36 A.D. to answer to the emperor, Tiberius Caesar, for his conduct, although Tiberius had died before he got there.

A lot of speculation has been made of what happened to Pilate after his dismissal from office in Judea. Several myths and legends have persisted about his last years and death, but little is known with certainty about what happened to him. One legend has him committing suicide in Vienne, Gaul (France). Another legend has him becoming a Christian and dying in the Faith. As we shall see, in spite of his shortcomings, Pilate had a sense of fairness and Roman justice that is commendable; however, he didn't have the courage of his convictions.

Jesus before Pilate: After his conviction by the Sanhedrin, Jesus was taken to the nearby fortress, Antonia, where Pilate was staying to keep his eyes on the Jews during the Passover, because Jewish revolutionaries were particularly active during this time. He ordinarily lived in Caesarea Maritima, which was a



city built by Herod the Great for Roman officials on the Mediterranean coast. The city included palaces, gymnasiums, theaters, pagan temples, a forum, marketplace, and other buildings built on the Greek model. To bring water to the city, Herod built a double aqueduct that brought water from springs at the foot of Mount Carmel. A boundary wall; and a 200 feet wide moat protecting the harbor to the south and west. Perhaps one of the most impressive parts of ancient Caesarea was its harbor, Sebastos, which means Augustus. It had been constructed on a coast that had no natural harbors and it served as an important commercial harbor during much of antiquity. At the time it was built, it ranked as the largest artificial harbor built in the open sea, even rivaling the harbor at Alexandria, Egypt. To curry favor with the Emperor, King Herod dedicated the city and harbor to Caesar Augustus.

The Jews knew better than to charge Jesus before Pilate with blasphemy, for he could have cared less about their “petty” religious issues. Rather than blasphemy, the Jews told Pilate that Jesus was stirring up the people, forbidding them to pay tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be a king (Luke 23). Pilate would have taken a charge of treason very seriously, because one of his main duties as procurator was to maintain peace and order within the province. Roman military administrators responded in an extremely severe manner against any rebellious subjects. Consequently, we must assume that he investigated the charges against Jesus very thoroughly. As the result of his investigation, he not only found the charges against Jesus unfounded, but he could see the malicious motives of the Jews who were jealous of their power and envious of Jesus' influence on the people. After listening to the accusations of the Jews, Pilate, to his credit, could see that Jesus does not claim royalty in the Roman sense of the word and found nothing that Jesus had done deserving the death penalty, and tried to free him several times.

Jesus before Herod Antipas:

Although Pilate had the power to free Jesus, each time he tried to release him, Jesus' enemies stirred up the crowd to protest so much that he hesitated. Thinking that if given the choice between Jesus or a criminal, Pilate on one occasion gave the Jews a choice of freeing Jesus or a criminal named Barabbas. Urged on by Jesus' enemies, the crowd shouted to free Barabbas and to crucify Jesus (Matthew 27: 15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:17-25; John 18:39-40).



On learning that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate on another occasion sent him to Herod Antipas, who was staying at his nearby palace. After questioning him, Herod also could find no fault with Jesus, and after he and his court having mocked him, sent him back dressed in king's robe to Pilate (Luke

23:6-12). Pilate continued to try and free Jesus, but the riled up crowd passionately resisted. They had Jesus where they wanted him and were not about to allow him to slip from their deadly grasp. Finally out of desperation, perhaps, Pilate had Jesus scourged, hoping that seeing a chastened Jesus would cause the Jews to have pity on Jesus and allow to him to free Jesus.



Jesus is scourged at the pillar: Scourging was a terrible punishment. In fact it was so terrible that Roman citizens were exempt from having it inflicted on them. The victim was tied or chained to a post and whipped by two men wielding instruments of torture called a flagrum. The post could have short enough that Jesus would have had to be on his knees while being scourged. The flagrum consisted of a handle with two or more leather straps attached to it. It usually had pieces of sharp bone or metal secured to the straps. According to the Holy Shroud the flagrums used to whip Jesus had small dumbbell shaped lead pieces attached to the ends of the straps. The leather straps would have cut the outer layers of skin off of Jesus' back and shoulders and the lead pieces, sharp bone, or metal pieces would have cut deeply into his inner skin layers and muscle, perhaps penetrating to the bones. The lead pieces were capable of penetrating through the cavity of the torso, like bullets,

injuring the internal organs. The very thought of our Lord having to endure such an ordeal makes one shudder in horror.

Jesus crowned with thorns: The next event in Jesus' ordeal was his being crowned with thorns. When the soldiers were through scourging Jesus, he would have been too weak from lack of food and rest as well as the trauma of the whipping itself to have stood up on his own. In fact, he must have been in a state of shock that could have killed him. There is evidence on the Shroud that Jesus was hit by a club about the face and tufts of his beard and hair are missing, indicating that the soldiers pulled it out. One of the soldiers placed a cloak on him to represent the robe of a king and another fashioned a crown of thorns and thrust it violently on to his head. The thorns would have penetrated to his skull and the Shroud reveals that one pierced his eye. A soldier took a reed and hit him about the head with it, then placed it in his hand to represent a king's scepter. Afterwards the soldiers struck him with their hands, spit on him, and got on their knees to mock him. (John 19). This was the glory with which our Lord and our God, the King of Heaven and Earth was honored while on earth. When the soldiers finished with their sport, they returned him to Pilate.



Jesus is condemned to death: When he was returned to Pilate, he presented Jesus to the crowd saying, “Ecce Homo!” meaning in English “Behold the man!” The chief priests and officers of the Jews responded by shouting, “Crucify him, crucify him!” In response Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him.” Then the Jews revealed their true motive for wanting to kill Jesus by saying, “We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God.” Up until that moment they had tried to give Pilate the impression that they had sentenced Jesus to death for treason, rather than blasphemy. After further private consultation with Jesus, Pilate made one last attempt to free him. In response the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.” Now they had Pilate exactly where they wanted him, this man who they thought had run roughshod over them and disregarded their religious customs was now at their mercy. Pilate had often been reported to Rome for his harsh administration of Judea, so he feared to be reported again for not putting down an alleged revolt against the emperor. The Romans did not like administrators who allowed waves to be made in the Empire. One more complaint could finish his career.

He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” And they cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” In response Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” And the contemptibly hypocritical chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19). Literally washing his hands of the whole affair, which was an allusion to the ancient Jewish rite that “when a man had been murdered and his murderer could not be found, the chief men in the region where the body was discovered were required, as a sign of their innocence of that crime, to wash their hands while saying: ‘Our hands did not shed this blood’” (Deut. 21:1-9; Matthew 27:24-25). Pilate let them take Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus carries his cross to Calvary: The Way of the Cross, the *Via Delorosa* or way of sorrows or suffering, starts at the Fortress Antonia where Jesus was tried before Pilate and traverses a distance of about 3,000 feet over hilly terrain. Over this distance Jesus was required to carry the horizontal beam of the cross, which weighed at least 70 pounds. It would almost be like carrying or dragging a railroad tie. A man in the best of shape would have had difficulty carrying such a cumbersome weight such a distance, let alone one who had been nearly beaten to death. In fact, Jesus was so weak that the Roman centurion in charge of the execution detail pressed into service a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene in North Africa, to help him carry his burden. One tradition tells us that he and his sons converted to Christianity as a result of his experience. The streets would have been crowded that day because of the Passover. On the way of sorrows, Jesus encountered some women who were weeping because of his suffering. He told them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, because he knew that during their children’s lifetimes the Romans would destroy the city and create great hardship and danger for them. Holy Scripture tells us that Jesus fell three times during the journey. The Holy Shroud displays wounds on his knees and elsewhere that could have resulted from these falls. Perhaps it was as he lay prostrate on the ground during one of these falls that Veronica wiped his face of blood and grime. At last he meet his mother. This was a terribly poignant moment for both of them; she seeing her dear son in such a pitiful condition and he seeing her in such painful sorrow. (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23).





Jesus is crucified and dies on the

Cross: The next station of the way of sorrows is the crucifixion itself. The journey ended at a small hill just outside the walls of the city. The hill has the shape of a skull, thus it was fittingly called the place of the skull, or Calvary, which is a derivative of the Latin *Calvaria*, which means skull, or as Golgotha for the Aramaic name for skull. Scholars have debated the exact location of the place, but it is probable that it is located in the church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was begun in the fourth century by Saint Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great.

Golgotha was an ideal place to hold executions, because it was in full view of people passing by the road to and from the northwest city gates. The idea was to set an example for potential revolutionaries or criminals. Our Lord was to die a criminal's death.

Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, not a Jewish one: Stoning to death was the Jewish penalty for blasphemy. Crucifixion was the most cruel and disgraceful method of killing a human being known at the time. For that reason even the shape of the cross was associated with vileness and unholy. The Jews hated Jesus so much that they weren't satisfied to kill him by stoning, but wanted him to suffer and die the most humiliating and ignominious death possible. The ordinary way to crucify was to fasten the criminal to the horizontal beam by driving nails through his wrists while he lay on his back on the ground; nails driven through the hands would not have held the weight of the body. Then the beam with the attached victim was lifted up by a crane-like device and secured to a permanent vertical beam, forming a cross. After this was done, one foot was placed over the other and a nail was driven through them both. Instead of nails, sometimes rope was used to secure the criminal to the cross, which was less painful, but prolonged the agony.

Medical doctors have debated for decades of what causes death by crucifixion. One theory is that death was caused by asphyxiation (suffocation); the victim died when he could breathe no more. As the victim hung from his arms, the weight of the body pulled the diaphragm of the chest so tight that he could hardly breathe. Using the nail in his feet as leverage, he lifted his body up to relieve the tension on his chest. This allowed him to recover his breath somewhat, but then his legs would weaken and collapse transferring the weight of his body to his arms once again. Ordinarily, a man could survive for a day under such stress. The pain was so great that a word for great pain—excruciating—has developed from crucifixion. Death could be hastened by breaking the victim's legs, for once his legs were broken, he could no longer lift himself up to breathe and he soon suffocated to death. Before nailing him to the Cross, the Roman soldiers stripped Jesus of his garments. Over his head they placed a sign in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—that read, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews” (John 19:19-22). The Roman soldiers divided his garments among themselves by casting lots. Two robbers were crucified on each side of him, one of whom was to repent and ask Jesus to remember him in his kingdom. Jesus canonized the first saint of his Church by saying, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:39-43).

The witnesses of this terrible event: At first, being such a public place, a large crowd of thousands had gathered to witness the execution, including the Jewish leaders who had condemned him. No doubt many of the people gathered there were among the crowd who had shouted “Hosanna” less than a week before. The Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees ridiculed him, shouting “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Also they mocked him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 23:35-37). It is probable that by the end of first hour the crowd had thinned down considerably, perhaps to less than half of what it had been at the beginning. By the end of the second hour, perhaps only a few hundred spectators were left. No doubt their departure was hastened by an eerie darkness that was gradually enveloping the earth. In another half an hour the crowd had shrunk so much that the Roman centurion allowed the Blessed Mother, John the beloved disciple, Mary Magdalene, and other devoted women to approach the foot of the Cross. It was then that Jesus said to his mother “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour onward the disciple took her into his own home (John 19:36-27). The Catholic Church has always taught that by these words Jesus was making his mother the spiritual mother of us all. Jesus died soon afterwards.

Jesus dies on the cross: St. John says that “After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), ‘I thirst.’ A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, ‘It is finished’; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19: 28-30). Perhaps as some have maintained, this was the fourth cup completing the Passover meal that Jesus hadn’t drunk. St. Matthew tells us of the end: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice . . . ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, ‘This man is calling Elijah.’ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit” (Matthew 27:46-50). St. Mark almost repeats Matthew to the word (Mark 15:33-37). St. Luke states that, “It was now about the sixth hour [about 3:00 P.M.], and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last” (Luke 23:44-46). Each of the Evangelists is giving us a different perspective of Jesus’ death on the Cross.

Remember that we discussed above that Jesus is that Second Person of the Holy Trinity who assumed a human body and became man (Incarnation). When he became a man he assumed a human body, uniting his divinity with his humanity; he is literally the God-Man. This means that he is fully human and fully divine. However, it must be made clear that Jesus remained a divine Person; he was not a human person. He is a divine Person who is united to human and divine natures. In short, nature is what a thing is and not something else. The mystery of the divine and human natures of Christ united in one divine Person is called the Hypostatic Union. In his humanity he is like us in all things but sin. He possesses a human body and a human soul with the faculties of intellect and free will. In his divinity he possesses a divine spirit with an infinite intellect and omnipotent will. Like in all human deaths, when Jesus died he separated his human soul from his human body. His soul then descended to the dead, the Limbo of the Fathers, the Bosom of Abraham. Because his humanity and divinity are united in one divine Person, we can say that when Jesus

suffered and died on the Cross, that God the Second Person of the Trinity suffered and died on the Cross. Of course, the divine spirit of Jesus cannot die. In fact, when Jesus descended to the dead, his divine spirit, which is always and everywhere present, attended him there, while at the same time remaining with his body in the tomb to preserve it until his resurrection. This is all, of course, a deep mystery far beyond our comprehension.

What it means that Jesus Christ died: Since Jesus is God, how could he die? Remember that we discussed in an earlier session that Jesus is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity who assumed a human body and became man (Incarnation). When he became a man, he united his divinity with his humanity; he is literally the God-Man. This means that he is fully human and fully divine. However, it must be made clear that Jesus remained a divine Person; he was not a human person. He is a divine Person who is united to human and divine natures. In short, nature is what a thing is and not something else. God's nature is what makes God, God and not something else (a creature for example). God's nature is distinguished from all other natures by his infinite spirit consisting of an omniscient intellect and omnipotent will. The mystery of the divine and human natures of Christ united in one divine Person is called the Hypostatic Union.

In his humanity he is like us in all things but sin. He possesses a human body and a human soul with the faculties of intellect and free will. In his divinity he possesses a divine spirit with an infinite intellect and will. Like the deaths of all human beings, when Jesus died he separated his human soul from his human body. His soul then descended to the dead, the Limbo of the Fathers, the Bosom of Abraham. Since the gates of Heaven had been closed from the time of Adam and Eve's fall from grace, all souls who died in God's grace went there to await the Redemption. Because his humanity and divinity are united in one divine Person, we can truly say that when Jesus suffered and died on the Cross, that God the Second Person of the Trinity suffered and died on the Cross. Of course, the divine spirit of Jesus cannot die. In fact, when Jesus descended to the dead, his divine spirit, which is always and everywhere present, attended him there, while at the same time remaining with his body in the tomb to preserve it from corruption until his resurrection. This is all, of course, a deep mystery far beyond our full comprehension.

For example, how could Jesus die since he is a divine Person? At least four questions have been debated over the centuries regarding the matter of his death.

1. For one, at the Crucifixion did Jesus' human nature die on the cross. The answer is no, because natures don't die. A nature is that which makes something one thing and not another; it is the distinguishing features of something compared with other things; it is not the thing itself. Only persons die, because they are things, beings, i.e., human beings. When a human dies, it is not his human nature that dies, it is his person that dies. His soul is separated from his body. It is the soul that forms and gives life to the body; so death is the separation of the soul from the body. However, the human soul is immortal, because it isn't composed of parts, so it can't decompose. The question is: since Jesus is a divine person, when he died, did God die.
2. For another closely related question that has been debated for many centuries, did only the human person of Jesus die on the Cross, not his divine person. The answer to this question is no, because he is a divine person, not a human person. There is only one Person, the divine, who already had a divine nature and who took on a human nature.

3. Although we have already answered this question, the third question is, did Jesus' human and divine natures both die on the cross, which implies that the universe was kept going by the Father and the Holy Spirit until his Resurrection. The answer to this question is false, because as I said, natures don't die, persons do. Moreover, if this were true, it suggests that Jesus couldn't keep the universe going, because he ceased to be God between the time of his death and his Resurrection.
4. The fourth question is, did God suffer and die on the cross? Taking into account what we have had to say about persons and natures, the answer is yes, because the person who suffered and died on the cross was a divine Person, the Son of God the Father. This doesn't mean that God ceased to exist, which, of course, was not the case. This is a complicated issue. One source has said that "If we ask, 'What died on the cross?' I suppose we can answer, 'Christ's human nature.' But the question asked, 'Who died on the cross?' Only a person is a 'who.'" He concludes by saying, "If only the person dies (not the human nature) and God—who in his divinity is life and therefore his divine person—cannot die, then what is left to have died? Because of the hypostatic union, when Christ's human nature died, we can say God died. Divinity did not." Beyond that lies a great mystery which we won't understand until we die and hopefully go to Heaven, when all that is necessary for us to know will be revealed to us. I think that all we can say now with confidence is that when he died, Jesus separated his human soul from his body and his soul descended to the dead, the limbo of the Fathers, the Bosom of Abraham. His divine spirit descended to the dead with his human soul and also accompanied his body in the tomb to keep it from decomposing.

Because Jesus was fully human during his sojourn on earth, he possessed a human nervous system and human senses; consequently, he could suffer and feel emotions just like us. In fact, theologians tell us that Jesus was created with a human nature, "extraordinarily sensitive to suffering since this was the method chosen for our Redemption." It is said that when he did feel emotions, "they were always directed toward a proper object and always totally in harmony with His intellect and will." Moreover, since the divine Person Jesus Christ is both God and Man, it is totally correct to say that "God suffered, God died, God was hungry, God was sorrowful. It is also correct to say that a Man rose from the dead, a Man worked miracles, a Man offered a perfect sacrifice to the Father, a Man sits at the right hand of the Father, a Man will come to judge the living and the dead."

Jesus' human soul descends to the dead: The "Limbo of the Fathers", also called the "Limbo of the Patriarchs", also called the Bosom of Abraham, was considered a temporary state for those who died in God's grace and friendship after the fall of Adam and Eve, because the doors of Heaven had been closed until God sent his son into the world to redeem it; that is, to pay for all of the damage caused by the original sin of our first parents and the actual sins of all of their descendants. Jesus Christ opened the doors of his Heavenly abode when he descended to the dead at his death on the Cross. In reference to the place of the dead, the *Catechism* states that "The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was 'raised from the dead' presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection. This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Saviour, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there" (No. 632).

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The Church teaches that death is the separation of the soul from the body. This also applies to Jesus' death. The soul forms and gives life to the body. When Jesus died, he separated his human soul from his body. Accompanied by his divine person, his soul descended into hell or to the dead, which was the Limbo of the Fathers, a place or state of rest where the souls of the just resided who had died before his ascension until he opened Heaven to them. The *Catechism* states:

Since the 'Author of life' who was killed is the same 'living one [who has] risen' the divine person of the Son of God necessarily continued to possess his human soul and body, separated from each other by death. By the fact that at Christ's death his soul was separated from his flesh, his one person is not itself divided into two persons; for the human body and soul of Christ have existed in the same way from the beginning of his earthly existence, in the divine person of the Word; and in death, although separated from each other, both remained with one and the same person of the Word" (No. 626).

The *Catechism* continues by saying:

[Christ's death] was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union which the person of the Son retained with his body, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for 'it was not possible for death to hold him' and therefore 'divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption. 'Both of these statements can be said of Christ: 'He was cut off out of the land of the living', and 'My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption.' Jesus' Resurrection 'on the third day' was the sign of this, also because bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death (No. 627).

The *Catechism* summarizes by stating, "During Christ's period in the tomb, his divine person continued to assume both his soul and his body, although they were separated from each other by death. For this reason the dead Christ's body 'saw no corruption'" (No. 630). Jesus was in complete control of his life, and he did not die until he was ready.

Hell is mentioned in some versions of the Creed also called Hades or Sheol. To quote the *Catechism* on this matter:

Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, 'hell'—Sheol in Hebrew or Hades in Greek—because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into 'Abraham's bosom': 'It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Saviour in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell.' Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him" (No. 633). In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him (No. 637).

Jesus' mission was to announce to the faithfully departed that their salvation had been obtained by his death and coming resurrection. Unrestricted by space, his divine person also stayed with his body to preserve it for the resurrection.

The Hell of the damned: What then was the place called where the damned went at death? To distinguish it from Sheol, the place of the damned was called Gehenna. It was named after a valley to the southwest of Jerusalem. It had a bad reputation because it was a place where idolatry had been practiced and had become a place where trash was thrown and burned. It became a synonym for Hell, the place of the damned, in the New Testament. There it is made clear that Hell is a real place, not simply a figure of speech. There are no words to describe the severity of the mental, physical, and emotional suffering of the damned, and their suffering never ends. The intensity of the suffering depends upon how many and how great were their sins. However, the greatest suffering in Hell is caused by being deprived of the Beatific Vision, the vision of God. As St. Augustine once said, “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” The damned will always be restless, because they know that they will never find rest in God.

Miraculous events accompany Jesus' death: Now that we have completed what it means that Jesus died, let's get back to the events that occurred after his death! At the instant of his death many miraculous events occurred. St. Luke tells us that a darkness gradually came over the entire land from about noon until 3:00 P.M. (Luke 23:44). Added to this St. Matthew says that the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The curtain was a white, purple, blue, and red Babylonian carpet that separated the inner Holy of Holies—the place where it was believed God dwelled—from the outer room or holy place, a kind of sacristy. The tearing of the huge temple curtain is symbolic of the end of the Old Covenant and its fulfillment in the New and Everlasting Covenant sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. It also symbolizes the invitation for all peoples to become the chosen people of God, not just the Israelites. The destruction of the curtain symbolized the removal of the boundary between Jew and Gentile, and now all men were to be included in God's family. St. Matthew also tells us that the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs were seen in the holy city and by many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:51-54). St. Luke adds that “when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’ And all the multitudes that assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts (Luke 23:47-48). Scholars have debated for centuries what the Jewish leaders thought about these awesome events, but relatively few of them came to believe that Jesus is the son of God, as did the Roman centurion.

Not a bone of Jesus was broken: Even though Jesus received terrible injuries during his scourging and crucifixion, none of Jesus' bones were broken. In this regard, St. John says that “Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs” (John 19:31-33). Then John adds, “But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, ‘Not a bone of him shall be broken.’ And again another scripture says, ‘They shall look on him whom they have pierced.’” (John 34-37).

In summary, Pilate had sent a contingent of Roman soldiers to the site of execution to make sure that the

victims were dead before sundown, the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath and in this case the Passover as well. The practice was to break the legs of those being executed to hasten their deaths. Since Jesus was already dead, they did not break his legs, but to make sure he was dead one of the soldiers thrust his spear into Jesus' side piercing his heart, causing blood and water to flow from the wound (John 19:33-34).

The prophecies of these events probably refer to Exodus 12:46 where the Jews were commanded that "In one house shall [the Passover Lamb] be eaten; you shall not carry forth any of the flesh outside the house; and you shall not break a bone of it." Also, Numbers 9:12 applies, which states, "They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break a bone of it." Since Jesus was taking the place of the Passover Lamb, it was appropriate that his bones not be broken either. The prophecy referred to is said to be Psalm 34:20, which states, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

The blood from Jesus' side symbolizes the birth of the Church: St. John Chrysostom, who was an early Church Father and Doctor of the Church, wrote of this matter:

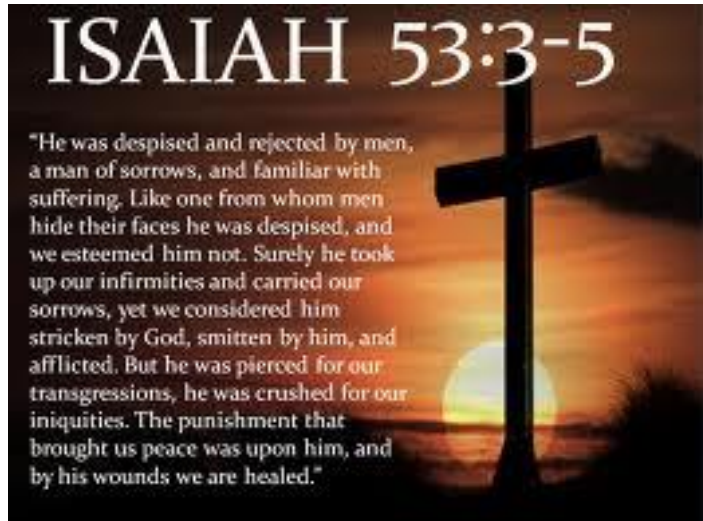
If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master's side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance and immediately there poured out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of baptism and the blood, of the holy eucharist. [He continues to say], "From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, 'the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit', and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the Eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: 'Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!' As God then took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

Jesus is buried: Now that we have completed our discussion of Jesus' death, let's go on to his burial. As evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to get permission to take Jesus' body down from the Cross and prepare it for burial. He and his servants packed the body with about a hundred pounds of spices—myrrh and aloes—supplied by Nicodemus and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud. Then they laid the body in a nearby tomb that Joseph of Arimathea had recently hewn in a rock for himself (Matthew 27:57-62; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42). Because the chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees were afraid that some of Jesus' disciples might steal his body and claim that he had risen from the dead, they went to Pilate the next day to ask that the tomb be sealed and a Roman guard be placed at the entrance. According to St. Matthew, he told them that they had their own guards and to seal and guard the tomb themselves, which they did (Matthew 27: 62-66). However, I have read several sources over the years that maintain that the guard was composed of Roman soldiers. I can't verify this one way or the other, but after the guards found the grave empty, they went to the chief priests to tell them what had taken place. They assembled the elders to discuss the matter, and then gave the guards some money to spread the word around that the disciples had stolen the body, and that if the Roman governor would hear about it, they would keep them out of trouble. They took the money and spread the story among the Jews that the body had been stolen (Matthew 28:11-15). It doesn't seem plausible to me that Roman soldiers would have reported to the chief priests, but to their own

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commanders, and had they let something like this happen, they would have been executed. I think that we can say for certain that Roman soldiers crucified Jesus, but we aren't sure about them guarding the tomb. It's probable that the soldiers who guarded Jesus were temple guards. I've read that the story of the guards being Roman soldiers comes from the apocryphal Gospel of Peter.

Jesus, the suffering servant: Jesus as Messiah was “suffering servant” and not a “conquering king.” Jesus certainly fulfilled the role of a suffering servant. Isaiah writes of the suffering servant to come (Isaiah 53). The *Catechism* referring to this chapter of Isaiah says “By his loving obedience to the Father, ‘unto death, even death on a cross’ Jesus fulfils the atoning mission of the suffering servant, who will ‘make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities’” (No. 623). In another place, the *Catechism* says of the Jesus the suffering servant:



The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of 'the righteous one, my servant' as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had 'received', St. Paul professes that 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.' In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles (No. 601).

Jesus voluntarily emptied of himself, taking “the form of a slave.” The *Catechism* states in this regard: “Jesus had both divine nature and human nature but ‘he emptied himself’ of the glory of his divine nature. The Navarre Bible commentary explains: ‘Christ did not shed his divine nature; he simply shed its glory, its aura; if he had not done so it would have shown through his human nature . . . Christ could not cease to be God, but he could temporarily renounce the exercise of rights that belonged to him as God—which is what he did.’” (No. 472). Although Jesus did not deserve to experience the consequences of Original Sin that all human beings must undergo, he subjected himself to thirst, hunger, exhaustion, suffering, sorrow, anger, and even death on a Cross to show how much he loves us.

Great care must be taken to get what St. Paul meant in Philippians 2:7 correct where he says: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” He didn't mean by this that Jesus was giving up his divinity when he assumed a human nature containing a body and soul into his divine person. Recall from our discussion above in this essay that Jesus is a divine person, not a human person. He didn't give up his divine personhood or nature

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when he united his divinity with his humanity. St. Paul meant by “emptiness” (kenosis in Greek) is the “self-emptying of his own will and becoming entirely receptive to the Father’s divine will. In other words, in his humanity Jesus subordinated himself to his Father’s will, yet while remaining a divine person co-equal and co-eternal with his Father.

To correct any misunderstandings about this issue, Pope Pius XII in 1951 wrote *Sempiternus Rex Christus*, in which he condemns a particular interpretation of Philippians in regards to the kenosis:

There is another enemy of the faith of Chalcedon, widely diffused outside the fold of the Catholic religion. This is an opinion for which a rashly and falsely understood sentence of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (ii, 7), supplies a basis and a shape. This is called the kenotic doctrine, and according to it, they imagine that the divinity was taken away from the Word in Christ. It is a wicked invention, equally to be condemned with the Docetism opposed to it. It reduces the whole mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption to empty the bloodless imaginations. 'With the entire and perfect nature of man'—thus grandly St. Leo the Great—'He Who was true God was born, complete in his own nature, complete in ours' (Ep. xxviii, 3. PL. Liv, 763. Cf. Serm. xxiii, 2. PL. lvi, 201).[8]

Jesus gives infinite worth to suffering. He is the Suffering Servant who came into the world to suffer and die for mankind. His sacrifice made suffering redemptive. By redemptive means that suffering pays for the damage cause by sin. Another way of putting this is that it satisfies a debt. Jesus’ suffering was redemptive, because since he is divine, his suffering being infinite satisfied the debt incurred by original and all actual sins ever committed. Even though our suffering is finite compared to his, we too can make our suffering redemptive by uniting it to his; by offering it to God for the reparation of sins, for the conversion of sinners, and for the poor souls in Purgatory.

We Christians have the duty to take up our crosses daily and follow in the footsteps of Jesus; there is simply no other way to get to Heaven. This means that we must embrace our suffering and unite it to his suffering. Why God permits the innocent to suffer is still a mystery; but Christians should consider it a privilege to be able to suffer for Jesus’ sake. He was the most innocent person who ever lived, yet he suffered more than any person who has ever lived. His suffering and death was the greatest injustice ever committed. Who are we to reject any suffering that comes our way? An old saying goes something like this: Good Friday was a bad day for Jesus, but a good day for us. Although Jesus’ suffering and death was the greatest evil ever committed, it brought about the greatest good ever accomplished, the salvation of humankind.

The Blessed Mother Mary didn’t deserve to suffer either. Next to her son, Jesus, Mary was the most perfect person that ever lived, yet she is known as our Lady of Sorrows. Mary suffered more than any other human being in the history of the world except Jesus. She didn’t deserve to suffer, because she was free from Original Sin as well as actual sin. She became the perfect model for us when she united her suffering to her Son’s at the foot of the Cross, who in turn offered it up to his heavenly Father. By giving his only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins, the Father showed the depths of his love for us (see John 3:16).

The Holy Shroud of Turin

A lot has been made over the Holy Shroud of Turin during the past twenty-five years or so. The Shroud, which is on display in the cathedral at Turin, Italy, is said to be Jesus' burial cloth by many reputable scholars and scientists.

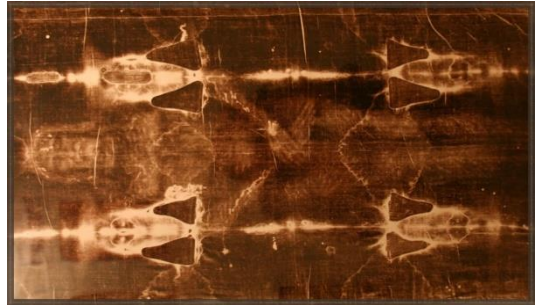


It poignantly reveals the terrible ordeal that he endured. Tradition has it that after Jesus ascended into Heaven, a letter arrived asking him to come to Edessa to cure the king who was ill with leprosy. The apostles sent one of their own, St Jude Thaddeus, with the burial cloth of Jesus. The story relates that the king was instantly cured when St. Jude placed the cloth on him. As a result the king and the inhabitants of the city were converted to Christianity. For some reason the cloth remained in Edessa and when the city came under attack by enemies many years later, it was hidden in the wall of the city. The Shroud was discovered in the city walls after an earthquake in 544 A.D. It was taken to Constantinople, where a picture of Jesus on a piece of cloth was found when the crusaders sacked the city in 1204. Little or nothing is known about the Shroud after that until it was first displayed in a church in Lirey, France by Geoffrey II de Charny in 1357. Margaret de Charny, gave the Shroud to the House of Savoy, an Italian noble family, in 1453. It was almost destroyed in a fire in 1532. Molten silver from the reliquary that contained the Shroud and water used to put the fire out permanently damaged the cloth. The most visible damage caused by the fire was two scorch lines, each with four large scorch marks. Fortunately, the image itself was not too seriously damaged and the Poor Clare Nuns repaired the Shroud. The Savoy's moved the Shroud to Turin, Italy in 1578. It has remained there except for a short time when it was hidden during World War II in the Abbey of Montevergine in Avellino, Italy. It

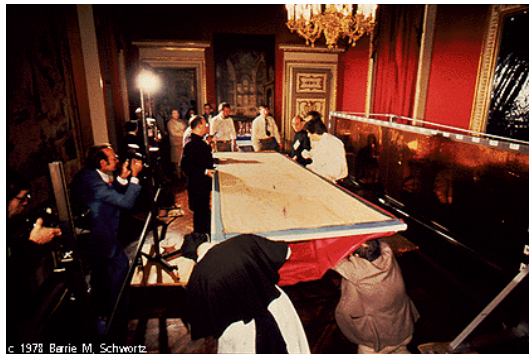
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remained the property of the House of Savoy until it was bequeathed to the Catholic Church after the death of the deposed king of Italy, Umberto II of Savoy in 1986. It is kept in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, northern Italy.

The Shroud is an old, blood-stained piece of linen cloth with traces of limestone dirt traced to the area of Jerusalem. Modern forensic medicine has established that the image on the cloth is an anatomically correct depiction of a dead man in a state of rigor mortis who was tortured and crucified. The wounds portrayed on the front and back of image of the body are perfectly consistent with the scourging and crucifixion suffered by our Lord.



This might be the linen cloth provided by Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus for Jesus' burial. According to Jewish burial customs, Jesus' body was placed on a long piece of linen cloth. After the Resurrection Peter and John found the Shroud neatly folded, which led them to conclude that Jesus had indeed arisen from the dead and that his body had not been stolen by grave robbers who would not have taken the time to fold it. For centuries all that could be seen on the cloth was faint markings with bloodstains. But with the advent of modern scientific instrumentation and research techniques, modern science has unveiled an image of a man that had undergone torture and crucifixion exactly as Jesus endured as described in the Gospels. The origins of the Shroud and its image has been the subject of intense debate among scientists, theologians, historians and researchers for almost a century. Some contend that the Shroud is Jesus' actual burial cloth and that the face image is the "Holy Face of Jesus", whereas others contend that it was created in the Middle Ages



Scientific research on the Shroud: A considerable amount of scientific research has been done to determine whether or not the Shroud is authentic! It was photographed for the first time in 1898, when Secondo Pia discovered that it seemed to be a photographic negative. He was allowed to photograph it while it was being exhibited in the Turin Cathedral. Since then other discoveries have revealed many other strange things about the Shroud. All kinds of tests were done over the years. The image on the Shroud is much clearer in black-and-white negative than in

its natural color. In 1978 a detailed examination was carried out by a team of American scientists called the Shroud of Turin Research Project, Inc., STURP, using several very sophisticated scientific instruments. Some of them were associated with the U.S. Air Force Academy. They found no reliable evidences of forgery, and called the question of how the image was formed a mystery. The final result are as follows:

We can conclude for now that the Shroud image is that of a real human form of a scourged, crucified man. It is not the product of an artist. The blood stains are composed of hemoglobin and also give a positive test for serum albumin. The image is an ongoing mystery and until further chemical studies are made, perhaps by this group of scientists, or perhaps by some scientists in the future, the problem

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remains unsolved.

Anatomical Forensics: Markings on the body: The markings on the body depict a man who had injuries to the face as would be consistent with blows, wounds from being scourged, wounds caused by a crown of thorns, injuries from falls to the ground, wounds in the hands (wrists), feet, and side as Jesus would of had, and abrasions to the shoulders as would a man carrying a heavy object like the horizontal beam of the Cross.

Blood flow patterns: Bloodstains have been detected on the wound areas of the Shroud. I read a book several years ago by a hematologist who has done extensive research on the Shroud, and his conclusion is that there is blood around the area of the wounds. Moreover, there exists on the Shroud blood flow patterns caused by a crucified man raising and lowering his body to breathe.



Other forensic evidence found on the Shroud would indicate that it could be Jesus' burial cloth. Among other forensic discoveries found on the Shroud are the following:

- One wrist bears a large, round wound, claimed to be from piercing (the second wrist is hidden by the folding of the hands).
- Upward gouge in the side penetrating into the thoracic cavity. Proponents claim this was a post-mortem event and there are separate components of red blood cells and serum draining from the lesion.
- Small punctures around the forehead and scalp.
- Scores of linear wounds on the torso and legs. Proponents claim that the wounds are consistent with the distinctive dumbbell wounds of a Roman flagrum.
- Swelling of the face from severe beatings.
- Differing patterns of blood flow as would be caused by a crucified man raising and lowering his body in order to breathe during crucifixion. Streams of blood down both arms. Proponents claim that the blood drippings from the main flow occurred in response to gravity at an angle that would occur during crucifixion.
- No evidence of either leg being fractured.
- Large puncture wounds in the feet as if pierced by a single spike.
- Bruises on the face caused by the High Priest's servants striking him.
- Scourging by two men, one taller than the other, covering the entire body.
- Wounds about the top of the head from the crown of thorns.
- The lance wound from the side causing the flow of water and blood.
- The nail wounds in the wrists which severed the median nerves causing the thumbs to be jammed against the palms.
- A large abrasion on the shoulder caused by carrying of the Cross.
- Wounds on the knees caused by falls to the ground.

Historical Fabrics: The linen fabric used for the Shroud is of a material and weave pattern used in ancient Palestine. Pollen and seeds from ancient Palestine are found on the Shroud. Botanists have found pollen grains on the cloth that thrived in the areas of Palestine and Edessa (modern Turkey) in the First Century A.D.

Radiocarbon dating test; In 1988 a radiocarbon dating test was performed on small samples of the Shroud. The laboratories at Oxford University, the University of Arizona, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, concurred that the samples they tested dated from the Middle Ages, between 1260 and 1390. However, several researchers have claimed that the samples used for the dating test may not have been representative of the whole Shroud. For example, in 2010, a couple of professors of statistics published a scientific paper maintaining that the statistical analysis of the raw data obtained from the three laboratories for the radiocarbon test suggests the presence of a substantial contamination in the samples. Most scientists who have seriously studied the Shroud believe that the tests are invalid, because contamination and the fire that the cloth underwent in 1532 invalidated the results.

Coin images on the eyes of the man in the image: Some have claimed to have found impressions of Roman coins on the eyes of the figure on the Shroud. It seems that coins were placed over the dead man's eyes, which was the custom at the time. In fact, some scholars believe they have detected images on the coins that indicate they were minted during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Around 1980, Fr. Francis Filas, of Loyola University in Chicago, claimed to have found a coin image on one of the eyes of the Shroud. Filas declared he could read the inscription on the coin and subsequently identified it as a Roman “lepton”, a small coin minted during the early first century. Supposedly the coins were minted by Pontius Pilate in Palestine between October 28 A.D. and October 31 A.D. Filas’ theory is that the date on the coin proved the Shroud's age. Although his work was widely publicized and seemed quite convincing, many scientists remained skeptical of his conclusions. In the fall of 1996, the Italian scientist, Baima Bollone, claimed he found an image of a coin above one of the eyes on the Shroud. In recent years, Dr. Alan Whanger and his research team claimed to have discovered additional images on the Shroud, including various flowers, a spear tip and other items. And again, many in the scientific community remain skeptical.

Hypotheses explaining how the image was formed: For one, no pigments or evidence of brush strokes have been found. Chemists and art scholars have ruled out any possibility that the Shroud is a painting or any other known art form. How the image was formed is unknown. Modern science simply can't determine how the image was formed. Scientists have been unable to detect any pigments that a medieval forger might have used; the image shows no brush strokes or outlines. The image is faint, monochromatic, and homogenous. There is no “layering” of the image; only the upper-most fibers of the threads are affected. Moreover, the image is encoded with accurate three-dimensional information: the Shroud is a three-dimensional image, and it is a photographic negative, something that a medieval artist would not have been able to create.

Mechanisms of creation: Researchers have unsuccessfully created a Shroud using various techniques, such as block print, engravings, a hot statue, and bas-relief. Also, several researchers have posed different hypotheses, most of them requiring some great burst of energy, because the image appears to have been created by some form of heat, such as a scorch. The image isn't a scorch though, because it doesn't penetrate into the

fabric. The image appears to be created by something like an atomic blast. If it is Jesus' burial cloth, we Catholics know what might have caused the image; the high level of energy produced by Jesus the instant he was resurrected. Many popular books have been published presenting diverse arguments for both authenticity and possible methods of forgery. A variety of scientific theories regarding the Shroud have since been proposed, based on disciplines ranging from chemistry to biology and medical forensics to optical image analysis. According to former editor Philip Ball of *Nature* magazine, "it's fair to say that, despite the seemingly definitive tests in 1988, the status of the Shroud of Turin is murkier than ever. Not least, the nature of the image and how it was fixed on the cloth remain deeply puzzling." Another source states that, "The Shroud remains one of the most studied artifacts in human history, and one of the most controversial"

The Catholic Churches' position on the Shroud



The Catholic Church has never formally endorsed nor has it rejected the Shroud; however, Pope Pius XII approved devotion of the Holy Face of Jesus in 1958. As I mentioned earlier, the House of Savoy gave the Shroud to the Holy See in 1986. The Church hasn't passed on the authenticity of the Shroud since then, and as is the case with all approved Catholic devotions, the Church leaves it up to the individual whether or not to engage in the practice.

Whether the Shroud is authentic or not has nothing to do with the validity of the Church's teachings. Although Pope John Paul II showed great respect for the Shroud, he stated in 1998 that "Since it is not a matter of faith, the Church has no specific competence to pronounce on these questions. She entrusts to scientists the task of continuing to investigate, so that satisfactory answers may be found to the questions connected with this Sheet." On the 100th Year anniversary of Secondo Pia's May 28, 1898 photograph, the Pope said, "The Shroud is an image of God's love as well as of human sin [...] The imprint left by the tortured body of the Crucified One, which attests to the tremendous human capacity for causing pain and death to one's fellow man, stands as an icon of the suffering of the innocent in every age."

Although Pope Benedict XVI has not commented on the Shroud's authenticity publicly, he wrote in 2000, as Cardinal Ratzinger that the Shroud of Turin is "a truly mysterious image, which no human artistry was capable of producing. In some inexplicable way, it appeared imprinted upon cloth and claimed to show the true face of Christ, the crucified and risen Lord." As Pope Benedict XVI, he approved the public display of the Shroud in the



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spring of 2010 and stated that he would like to go to Turin to see it along with other pilgrims. During his visit to see the Shroud on Sunday May 2, 2010, “he described the Shroud of Turin as an ‘extraordinary Icon’, the “Icon of Holy Saturday [...] corresponding in every way to what the Gospels tell us of Jesus, an Icon written in blood, the blood of a man who was scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and whose right side was pierced.” He also said that in the Turin Shroud “we see, as in a mirror, our suffering in the suffering of Christ.” I’ve read that on May 30, 2010 he beatified Sister Maria Pierina De Micheli who coined the Holy Face Medal, based on Secondo Pia’s photograph of the Shroud.

Responsibility for the death of Jesus

The Jews have been blamed for Jesus’ death for centuries, with tragic results. That had been a contentious issue from the time of his death to the present day. Jesus had many enemies who hated him enough to want to kill Him. Vatican Council II teaches that although much of the Jewish leadership at the time of Jesus pressed for his death, his death cannot be blamed on all of the Jews then living. As we have seen, two of them that believed in Jesus were the Pharisee Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Speaking of them and other prominent Jews who believed in Jesus the *Catechism* says:

Among the religious authorities of Jerusalem, not only were the Pharisee Nicodemus and the prominent Joseph of Arimathea both secret disciples of Jesus, but there was also long-standing dissension about him, so much so that St. John says of these authorities on the very eve of Christ’s Passion, ‘many . . . believed in him’, though very imperfectly. This is not surprising, if one recalls that on the day after Pentecost ‘a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith’ and ‘some believers . . . belonged to the party of the Pharisees’ to the point that St. James could tell St. Paul, ‘How many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; and they are all zealous for the Law’ ” (No. 595).

Furthermore, let us not forget that Mary and all of Jesus’ first followers were faithful Jews. On the subject of the guilt of the Jews the *Catechism* states:

The historical complexity of Jesus’ trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. The personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles’ calls to conversion after Pentecost. Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept ‘the ignorance’ of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders. Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd’s cry: ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’, a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence. As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council: . . . neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion . . . the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture” (No. 597).

The *Catechism* says of those Jews who were Jesus’ enemies: “From the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, certain Pharisees and partisans of Herod together with priests and scribes agreed together to destroy him.

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Because of certain acts of his expelling demons, forgiving sins, healing on the sabbath day, his novel interpretation of the precepts of the Law regarding purity, and his familiarity with tax collectors and public sinners—some ill-intentioned persons suspected Jesus of demonic possession. He is accused of blasphemy and false prophecy, religious crimes which the Law punished with death by stoning” (No. 574, Also Nos. 581; 582; 588; 589).

The decisive matter that first got Jesus into trouble with the Jews was his claim to have authority to forgive sins, for only God can do this. They confronted him first at Capernaum when he forgave the sins of a paralytic man who had been lowered through the roof of a house where he was staying. The Scribes and Pharisees accused him of blasphemy. To prove that he had the power to forgive sins he also healed the man (Mark 2:1-12). They accused him of blasphemy on other occasions as well, the most significant being at the end of his ministry in Judea at his trial before Caiaphas.

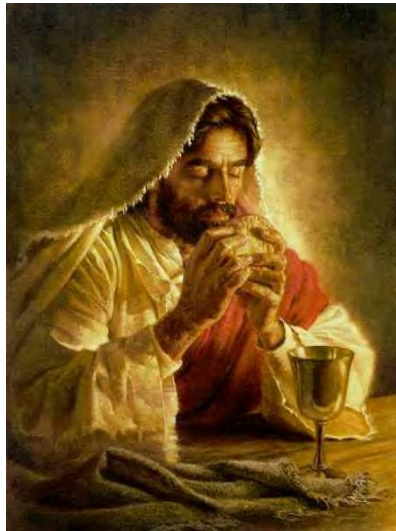
Furthermore, because of their exclusivity of the Pharisees, they considered the poor and the sick impure sinners deserving only their contempt, while Jesus loved all people and desired to redeem every one of them, especially the downtrodden of the world. Moreover, they opposed him, because he competed with them in interpreting the law, which they considered their exclusive right. The self-righteousness and hypocrisy of the Pharisees caused Jesus to unleash righteous anger on them on several occasions, which earned him their undying hatred.

In regard to the chief priests (the Sadducees), anyone whose activities might lead to instability posed a threat to their leadership. Recall how after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Caiaphas had warned his associates on the Sanhedrin who were afraid that all the people would follow Jesus and cause the Romans to destroy the Temple and the nation, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

In the final analysis, we are all responsible for Jesus' suffering and death. Every time we sin we help condemn him to death: we help scourge and crown him with thorns; we cry out crucify him and help drive the nails into his hands and feet. In this regard the *Catechism* says:

In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured. Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself, the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone: We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. And it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, 'None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' We, however, profess to know him. And when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him. Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins" (No. 598).

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass re-presents Jesus' death



The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass re-presents Jesus' suffering and death on the Cross. The Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Furthermore, Heaven is brought down to earth in the Mass, or better yet, earth is lifted up to Heaven. Moreover, the Last Supper, Calvary, and Christ's Resurrection are made present during the celebration. What's more, the Mass is a covenant, or agreement, between God and man; when we, the People of God, celebrate the Mass, we renew this covenant with God. Recall that Jesus sealed the covenant with his sacrifice on the Cross, which is made present at the Mass. Since God makes this "New and Everlasting Covenant" with a chosen people—the "People of God"—we must celebrate the renewal of the covenant as a people. Although God saves one soul at a time, he chooses to save us as members of a community

of believers, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Jesus instituted the Mass or Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Last Supper is the New and Everlasting Covenant (the covenant of love of God and neighbor) sealed by the Blood of the Lamb. It was the first Mass. The *Catechism* states that "By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom" (No. 1340).

The Mass is the "source and summit" of the Catholic Faith: Vatican Council II emphasized that the Eucharist or Mass is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (*Catechism* No. 1324). It is the source because all of the sacraments, ecclesiastical ministries, and works of the apostolate are tied to the Eucharist and oriented toward it. Everything about our faith is contained in the Mass. There would be no Faith without the Mass, because the Mass makes present the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, which is what our faith is all about. The Vatican II document Dogmatic Constitution on the Church or by its Latin name *Lumen Gentium* says, "Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, [the participants] offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with it." The Irish have an old saying coined by the last Lord Lieutenant to Ireland, Augustine Birrell, that goes: "It is the Mass that matters, it is the Mass that makes the difference."

The Mass is the summit of our faith, because as the *Catechism* says, "The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship men offer to Christ and through him to the Father in the Holy Spirit" (No. 1325).

The word Mass comes from the Latin word *missa*, which refers to the mission or sending with which the liturgical celebration concludes. In the modern Mass, the *Novus Ordo*, the priest dismisses the people by saying, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." When the Mass was said in Latin, the priest dismissed the

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faithful with the Latin words, *Ite, Missa est*. The Mass is concluded by the priest sending forth (*missio*) of the faithful, so that they may fulfill God's will in their daily lives. The word Eucharist, which is another word for Jesus' sacrifice, is derived from the Greek word for thanksgiving. St. Matthew best describes the first Mass said by Jesus himself. St. Matthew tells us that, "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25)).



During the consecration at Mass, the priest representing the person of Christ the High Priest (*in persona Christi*) says the words while holding the bread, "This is my body," and while holding the cup of wine, "This is the cup of my blood." At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become the substances of Jesus'

Body and Blood, even though the accidents appear to be bread and wine. By accidents is meant that the Body and Blood still looks like, smells like, feels like, and tastes like bread and wine, but truly is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fulfills the promise of Jesus' "Bread of Life" sermon (see John 6). Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine symbolizes the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and participants at Mass are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalen, John the beloved disciple, the other holy women, the holy saints and angels, the congregation, and the entire Church. Added to the consecration are the words, "the blood of the new and everlasting covenant which shall be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven," which makes reference to the covenant that fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant, which is sealed by the Blood of the Lamb—Jesus Christ—to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere. What Jesus was in effect doing was making present Calvary before the event had happened. All things are possible with God, of course. The canon of the Catholic Mass is a re-presentation of Jesus' first Mass.

The Redemption

The Redemption is, "the act by which Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of the whole human race, offered to God the Father His sufferings and death on the cross as satisfaction for sins in order to restore man to God's friendship and to reopen for him the gates of Heaven." To redeem means to pay for something, and by the Redemption Jesus Christ paid for all of the damage ever to be caused by original and actual sins. Since God is infinite, an offense against him is so great that only an infinite sacrifice is capable of making satisfaction for the damage caused by the offense. Being finite, humans were woefully inadequate to make a sacrifice sufficient to satisfy the debt

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they owed to God. Since an infinite sacrifice was necessary to satisfy the debt, only God himself could make such a sacrifice. Any act performed by the incarnate Christ was of infinite value simply because God was performing it. God the Father sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem it. It was fitting that the uncreated Son of God become a man to redeem the created sons and daughters of God the Father. The Redemption was to be accomplished by one like us in all things but sin: the God-Man. It could be said that we were redeemed by one of our own, one who represented us all before the Throne of God. Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer and die on the Cross to redeem us? Couldn't have God simply said that we are forgiven and cancel our debt. Yes, he could have done that had he chosen to do so. We could have been redeemed by any act of Christ whatsoever. Yet to show the depths of his love for us, he chose one of the most horrific deaths imaginable: scourging and crucifixion. These two forms of punishment were so degrading and torturous, that Rome would not permit its own citizens to be punished and executed in such a fashion. Theologians have told us that suffering and death were chosen as the method of redemption for the following reasons:

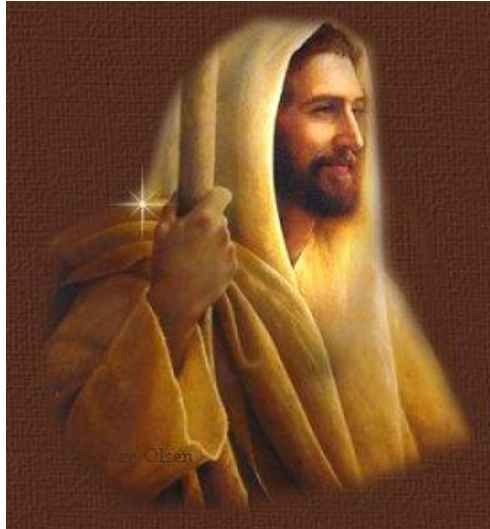
- To show us the evil of sin;
- To demonstrate God's great love for man;
- To show the infinite satisfaction required for sin;
- To teach us how to suffer and die and to give meaning to human suffering; and
- To allow man to make the greatest possible contribution to his own redemption: the offering of a human life.

Another question that has been long considered by theologians is: Why was it fitting that the Son become incarnate rather than the Father or the Holy Spirit? They have told us that, "Man is the created image of the Father; the Son is the uncreated image. It is appropriate that the uncreated image redeem the created image." Furthermore, they have said that "through the Incarnation and Redemption we are made adopted sons of God. It is thus appropriate that the Only Begotten Son of God make this adoption possible." Moreover, we are told that Christ's redemptive act had both a positive and a negative aspect. They say "The positive aspect is that Christ offered to the Father a perfect gift of worship, humility, obedience and love, thereby atoning for all of man's failures to worship, be humble, obey, and love. The negative aspect is that Christ took upon Himself the full effects of our sins. He could not sin, but He could bear our sins and their effects (shame, guilt, horror) to the extent that we never could." They have cited Isaiah and St Paul to prove this assertion. Isaiah tells us that "the Lord laid upon Him the guilt of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). St. Paul says "He Who knew no sin became sin that we might become the very holiness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

To summarize, the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the heart and soul of sacramental life for it makes present the most important event in the history of the world. The Mass is a commemoration and representation of Christ's one and only sacrifice on the Cross. The Mass brings Heaven to earth and makes present the Last Supper and Calvary. Furthermore, the doctrine of Transubstantiation teaches that Jesus becomes present at the consecration and that he is really present in the Blessed Sacrament in his full humanity and divinity—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

He rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The Resurrection



The Redemption could never been accomplished without the Resurrection. Like all human deaths, Christ's Body and Soul were separated at his death. However, both his body and soul remained united to the divine Person. Consequently, Jesus' dead body was worthy of adoration as well as was his human soul that had descended to the Limbo of the Fathers, the Bosom of Abraham. On Easter Sunday at his Resurrection, he reunited his soul with a Glorified Body, meaning in his humanity he is no longer subject to the limitations of time and space and possesses the qualities of impassability, which means he is free from suffering, sorrow, or death; subtlety, which means that his spiritual nature shines through and is not hidden in his body; agility, which means that his soul commands his body to move with great ease and speed; and clarity, which means that

his body is free of any deformities caused by his passion, except that he will display the wounds in his hands, feet, and side forever as a reminder to us in Heaven of what he did for us. Jesus defeated death not only for himself, but for us as well (John 11:25-26). As I stated above in this essay, we who remain faithful to him to the end will also overcome death and possess the same qualities of the Glorified Body as he does and all the holy saints at the Last Judgment and the bodily Resurrection.

His Resurrection differed from that of, let's say, Lazarus, who when he was brought back to life, "simply returned to his normal human way of existing and would have to die again. Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, would die no more and had entered into His glory."

Theologians have identified a three-fold significance of Jesus' Resurrection:

1. First, it is the final, conclusive proof of his divinity.
2. Second, it is the promise that we too will rise from the dead.
3. Finally, it is the Father's ratification and acceptance of the Redemption; we know that we have truly been redeemed because God the Father signified his acceptance of the Redemptive act by raising Christ from the dead.

What's more, theologians tell us that "it is appropriate to say both that Jesus Christ arose from the dead and that God raised Jesus from the dead." This is so because, "Since Jesus is God, and all actions by the Trinity performed outside the Trinity are performed by all Three, both statements are correct. The Risen Christ now reigns as King of Heaven and earth, and it is His risen, glorified Body that we receive in the Eucharist." In other words, since Jesus is a divine Person, he rose from the dead by his own power, but also since he is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit as God the Holy Trinity, God in all the Persons raised him from the dead.

Jesus' Appearances



Sacred Scripture tells us that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, which is conclusive proof that he arose from the dead. A tradition from the beginning of the Church tells us that Jesus first appeared to his mother. Although the exact sequence of appearances is difficult to ascertain from the various accounts in the Gospels, it appears from the gospels that he next appeared to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb early Easter morning. The *Catechism* informs us that “Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the

evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One (No. 641). When she got to the tomb, she found that the stone over the entrance was rolled back and Jesus' body was gone. She ran to tell Peter—who had joined John and Jesus' mother by this time—and John. The two ran all the way to the empty tomb, the younger and faster John getting to the tomb first. Out of respect for Peter's primacy and his age, John waited for him to catch up and to enter the tomb first. When they saw the linen shroud lying by itself and the cloth that had covered Jesus' head lying folded up nearby, they knew that he had risen, because grave robbers would not have taken the time or the care to have neatly folded up the cloth. Afterwards, they returned to where they had been staying, which was, possibly, the upper room (John 20:1-10; Luke 24:1-12; Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-14).

It appears that next Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35 Mark 16:12). They did not recognize him at first, because he possessed a Glorified Body, and as he walked with them to Emmaus he makes a clear connection between the Old and New Testaments. Then he appears to Peter (Luke 24:34), and then to the Apostles in the Upper Room (John 20:19-29; Luke 24:36-43; Mark 16:14-18). Jesus appeared to 500 disciples on at least one occasion (1 Corinthians 15:3). And he appeared to the Apostles at the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20 John 21). Moreover, he appeared to St. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

The fact that Jesus' Disciples at first doubted his resurrection is pretty conclusive proof that he arose from the dead. Although it is an historical fact, the disciples did not easily come to believe that Jesus had, indeed, risen from the dead. Of their initial doubt the *Catechism* says “It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold. The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ('looking sad') and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an 'idle tale'. When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, 'he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen" (No. 643; John 20:34; Luke 24-10-12; Mark 16-14). In another place the *Catechism* continues on this subject:



Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. 'In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering.' Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee 'some doubted.' Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus (No. 644).

What the *Catechism* is here referring to is the fact that agnostic or atheistic modernist scripture scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries claimed that the Resurrection was later made up by overzealous Christians. Regarding proofs of Jesus' Resurrection, the *Catechism* states:

By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion. Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm. For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith" (No. 645; Luke 24; John 20; Matthew 28; Mark 16).

The *Catechism* is here referring to the properties of the Glorified Body discussed in a few paragraphs above. Over the centuries some have claimed that that Jesus' death was a sham and his resurrection a hoax. Each of these claims can be soundly refuted. For example:

- **The claim that Jesus' body was stolen:**

Some have claimed that the Apostles stole the body while the guards were sleeping: This is not likely, because the guards, whether they be Roman soldiers or temple guards, were professionals who didn't sleep on duty and the penalty for falling asleep on duty was death. Furthermore, the Apostles were fearful cowards who would not have attempted such a bold act. Moreover, scholars have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the vacant tomb of Jesus was a historical reality. The empty tomb is reported in very early sources, such as Mark's gospel and in St. Paul's early writings taken from much earlier sources close to the event and not possibly the product of legend (1 Corinthians 15). The fact that the gospels report that women discovered the empty tomb bolsters the story's authenticity, because women were not considered reliable witnesses at that time. What's more, both Christian and Jew



alike knew the site of Jesus' tomb, so the report of Jesus' resurrection could have been easily checked by skeptics. In fact, no one at the time ever claimed that the tomb still contained Jesus' body, not even the Roman authorities or Jewish leaders. Instead they invented the ridiculous story that the disciples stole the body.

- **The claim that the apostles were hallucinating when they saw the resurrected Jesus:** Some have argued that the Apostles and others who saw the resurrected Jesus were hallucinating: this is discounted by the fact that the tomb was empty, groups of people don't hallucinate, and his disciples saw him eat and touched him. The evidence for the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus didn't develop gradually over the years as mythological stories. To the contrary, the Church proclaimed the Resurrection to be the central proclamation from the very beginning. The ancient creed found in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians mentions several individuals who saw the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:3), and Paul even challenged doubters to talk with these individuals personally to determine the truth of the matter for themselves (1 Corinthians 15). The book of Acts is replete with accounts of persons having encounters with the resurrected Jesus and the gospels contain numerous descriptions of such encounters in detail. One scholar has concluded that "The appearances of Jesus are as well authenticated as anything in antiquity."
- **The claim that Jesus didn't really die on the Cross:** Even some have claimed that Jesus didn't really die on the Cross: this is disproven by the fact that Romans were expert at executing people and did not let living men off of the cross. Besides, they knew that they themselves would face death if any of their victims were to survive execution. Furthermore, one of the soldiers thrust a lance in the side of Jesus piercing his heart and lung. Doctors who have examined the medical and historical evidence have concluded that Jesus could not have survived the terrible torture of crucifixion, much less the large wound that pierced him. The idea that he somehow swooned on the Cross and pretended to be dead is preposterous. Even if Jesus had somehow survived the torture, only three days later his pitiful condition could never have "inspired a worldwide movement based on the premise that he had gloriously triumphed over the grave."

Modernist scripture scholars have said that the Gospel accounts were nothing but symbolic expressions of the Apostles conviction that Christ lived on in their hearts: this is disproven by the fact that the Apostles stressed the physical reality of the resurrection of Jesus and that they gave their lives for this belief. The disciples were in a unique position to know whether the Resurrection occurred, and they went to their deaths proclaiming it was true. No one in his or her right mind knowingly and willingly dies for a lie. This is especially true of skeptics like Thomas, Paul, and James who would not have died for their faith if the resurrection had not occurred. Further proof of their conviction that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead is that within a few weeks of the Crucifixion, thousands of Jews began to abandon important social practices that had critical sociological and religious importance for centuries. What's more, the early practice of the sacraments of the Eucharist and baptism affirm Jesus' resurrection and deity. And last but not least, the miraculous emergence and growth of the Church in the face of brutal Jewish and Roman persecution further attests to the truth of the Resurrection.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.



Forty days after his Resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives with his disciples present (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:1-11). He stayed on the earth this length of time to make certain his disciples believed that he had risen from the dead and to give them final instructions before ascending into Heaven. The *Catechism* states of this great event, “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys. But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity. Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand” (No. 659; Luke 1:32; John 18:37; Luke 19:38).

Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “Henceforth Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father: 'By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honour of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified” (No. 663).

Although Jesus ascended into Heaven, he promised that he would not abandon us, that he would not leave us orphans (John 14:18). Jesus is present among us as much as when he walked the earth in the following ways:

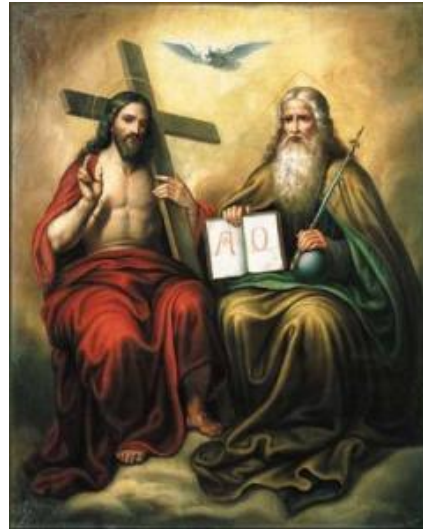
- In the Catholic Church, his Mystical Body (Matthew 28:20).
- In his sacraments.
- In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25).
- In the Blessed Sacrament where he is present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (John 6:51).
- In the Pope who is his vicar on earth (Matthew 16:19).
- In the ordained priesthood, who represent him *in persona Christi capitis* (Luke 19:7; 1 Corinthians 11:24)
- In the members of his Church who are Temples of the Holy Spirit and possess the Indwelling Trinity (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 1 Corinthians 3:16; John 14:23)
- As the Word of God the Father found in Holy Scripture. (John 1:1)

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- Where two or more are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20)
- In the Holy Trinity, which is always and everywhere present.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father: The *Catechism* states of this glorious event:

Henceforth Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father: "By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honor of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified . . . Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."⁵⁴⁷ After this event the apostles became witnesses of the "kingdom [that] will have no end (No. 548).



He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

At the end of time, Jesus Christ will come on the clouds accompanied by all the saints and angels to judge the living and the dead. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is called the Parousia. It represents Christ's ultimate triumph and the establishment of his kingdom. Since Jesus gave no indication when he would come again, many of the early Christians thought that he would come again during their lifetimes. At first they associated his references to his earthly kingdom –the Church–and the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in 70 A.D.) with the second coming.

Even though Jesus left us completely ignorant when he would come again, Scripture tells us some of the signs that will precede the end times and his second coming. These signs include:

- **Preaching of the Gospel throughout the world** (Mark 16:15): Concerning this sign Jesus is recorded as saying in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come.” This sign was understood by Chrysostom and Theophilus as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, but, according to the majority of Biblical scholars, Christ is here speaking of the end of the world.
- **A Great Apostasy (2 Thessalonians: 1):** The *Catechism* says of the Great Apostasy, “Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth (No 675).
- **The Return of Enoch and Elijah in some form (Revelation 11:3):** The Church Fathers almost unanimously believed that these two men, who had never tasted death, are reserved for the last times to be precursors of the Second Coming. This belief was based on several texts of Scripture, including Elijah in Malachi 4:5-6; Ecclesiasticus 48:10; Matthew 17:11; and concerning Enoch in Ecclesiasticus 44:16.



- **Conversion of the Jews:** According to the interpretation of the Church Fathers, the conversion of the Jews towards the end of the world is foretold by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (11:25-26): “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, . . . that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved as it is written: “There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”
- **The coming of Antichrist:** The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. Although there exists a great deal of difference of opinion on this subject, it is generally believed from these and other texts that before the Second Coming there will arise a powerful adversary of Christ, who will seduce the nations by his wonders, and persecute the Church. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, St. Paul also speaks of the man of sin, the son of perdition generally identified with the Antichrist. St. John says that he is to come in the last days (1 John 2:18; 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7).
- **Extraordinary Disturbances of Nature:** Scriptures clearly indicate that the judgment will be preceded by unwanted and terrifying disturbances of the physical universe (Matthew 24:29; Luke 21:25-26). Some writers, also understand the wars, pestilences, famines, and earthquakes foretold in Matthew 24:6 as among the calamities of the last times. Mark 13:24 tells us of the darkening of the sun and the moon and Mark 13:25 of the falling of the stars from the heavens.
- **A universal conflagration:** Matthew 13:47-50 speaks of the purging of the world in a universal conflagration. In the Apostolic writings we are told that the end of the world will be brought about through a general conflagration, which, however, will not annihilate the present creation, but will change its form and appearance (2 Peter 3:10-13; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3, and 16:15). Natural science tells us of the possibility of such catastrophes being produced in the ordinary course of events, but theologians generally tend to believe that their causes will be entirely miraculous.
- **The Trumpet of Resurrection:** Several texts in the New Testament make mention of a voice or trumpet which will awaken the dead to resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; John 5:28). St. Thomas says that these passages refer either to the voice or to the apparition of Christ, which will cause the resurrection of the dead
- **The Sign of the Son of Man appearing in the Heavens:** In Matthew 24:30, this is indicated as the sign immediately preceding the appearance of Christ to judge the world. By this sign the Fathers of the Church generally understand the appearance in the sky of the Cross on which the Savior died or else of a wonderful cross of light.

Down through the ages, men have often thought they saw signs of the imminent end of the world. Of course, the end has not yet come, but the signs that Jesus foretold will attend the end when it

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does come. The *Catechism* says of the end times, “Since the ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are 'delayed” (No. 673).

A New Heaven and a New Earth: The *Catechism* speaks of a New Heaven and a New Earth being established at the end of time. In some form that has not been revealed to us, the old world will cease to be and a New Heaven and a New Earth will replace it. Perhaps the New Heaven will be a perfected earth, a New Earth, a reestablishment of the Garden of Eden. The *Catechism* says of the new heaven and earth:

At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign forever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed: The Church . . . will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (No. 1042). [The *Catechism* continues] Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, “new heavens and a new earth.” It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single head 'all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth (No. 1043).

The *Catechism* does such a good job with this topic that I will continue to quote it at some length:

In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men. 'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (*Catechism*, No. 1044). "For man, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been 'in the nature of sacrament (No. 1045). For the cosmos, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man: For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God . . . in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay. . . . We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (No. 1046). The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, 'so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just,' sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ (No. 1047).

The world of time and space in which we live will one day come to an end. It ends for each of us the day we die and enter eternity. When the end of time comes for the entire human race, the dead will rise from the grave and Jesus Christ will appear in all of his glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23; Matthew 10:21-24; 16:27; Mark 8:38; 13:26; Luke 9:26; 21:27). The *Catechism* says “On Judgment Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory

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to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history” (681).

Isaiah 65:18-25

Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create; For I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight; I will rejoice in Jerusalem and exult in my people. No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there, or the sound of crying; No longer shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not round out his full lifetime; He dies a mere youth who reaches but a hundred years, and he who fails of a hundred shall be thought accursed. They shall live in the houses they build, and eat the fruit of the vineyards they plant; They shall not build houses for others to live in, or plant for others to eat. As the years of a tree, so the years of my people; and my chosen ones shall long enjoy the produce of their hands. They shall not toil in vain, nor beget children for sudden destruction; For a race blessed by the LORD are they and their offspring. Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hearken to them. The wolf and the lamb shall graze alike, and the lion shall eat hay like the ox (but the serpent's food shall be dust). None shall hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them (as their God). He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, (for) the old order has passed away.”

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.



The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Jesus revealed his existence to us. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the love the Father and the Son have for each other. Love is an act of the will and God the Father and Son both share an infinite will. He has been symbolized as fire, water, a dove, a cloud and light, a seal, and the hand and finger of God. He is the love between the Father and the Son, which somehow mysteriously constitutes a third Person of the Trinity.

Since the Holy Spirit proceeds by an act of will, rather than the intellect, of the Father and the Son, he does not proceed as a perfect image through the process of generation, as does the Son; therefore, he is not begotten. Consequently, he cannot be considered the Father's son. The fifth century Athanasian Creed says of this matter: "The Holy Spirit is not made nor created nor generated, but proceeds from the Father and the Son." Theologians have called this type of procession "spiration", from the word "spirit". It describes the loving relationship between the Father and the Son, which results in the procession of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The *Catechism* says of the relationships among the persons of the Holy Trinity:

The divine persons are relative to one another. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance. Indeed everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship. Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son. It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds. The divine Unity is Triune. (No. 255)

The Trinitarian Family, therefore, consists of three divine Persons, but only one God—three in one. All three persons share in one divine nature or essence, which is common to all three. The three persons of the Holy Trinity are co-equal in power, glory, majesty, and wisdom and all of them have existed from all eternity. They are distinguished only by their origin, which is the Father. The Father and the Son communicate their entire being to the Holy Spirit. They share the same divine spirit with an omniscient intellect and omnipotent will. The Father "has no origin. The Son proceeds from the Father by intellectual generation. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from one principle because of their intense mutual love. The Father loves

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the Son and the Son loves the Father so intensely that their mutual love terminates in the third Person of the Blessed Trinity” (*Fundamentals of Catholicism*, Vol. 2, Fr. Kenneth Baker).

The *Catechism* tells us that, “The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son. The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* says the Holy Spirit is:

distinct from the Father and the Son but one in being, coequal, and coeternal with them, because, like them, he is in the fullest sense God. The Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son as from a single principle, through what is called a single spiration. He is the personal infinite term of the eternal act of mutual love of the Father and the Son; hence his name of Spirit, as the issue or term of God's eternal love or act of will. He is also called the Spirit of Truth, the Creator Spirit, the Sanctifier, as the gifts of revelation, of creation (and re-creation), and of sanctification are the outpourings of God's love, and therefore appropriated to the Spirit of Love, though whatever God does outside the Trinity (in the world of creatures) belongs to the common or united action of the three divine persons. He is called Dove, because it was in this form that he descended visibly upon Christ in the Jordan (Mark 1:10).

I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

The Catholic Church was born of the New Adam, Jesus Christ. The Church was formed from the blood and water that gushed from the side of Jesus in the waters of baptism just as the woman, Eve, was formed from the side of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

The Catholic Church finds its origins in the Holy Trinity. God created the entire universe and especially man to share in the Trinitarian life. To achieve this end the Family of God, beginning with Adam and Eve, is gradually formed throughout history in accordance with his plan. The *Catechism* states of this matter:

Christians of the first centuries said, “The world was created for the sake of the Church.” God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the “convocation” of men in Christ, and this “convocation” is the Church. The Church is the goal of all things, and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angels’ fall and man’s sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of his arm and the whole measure of the love he wanted to give the world: Just as God’s will is creation and is called “the world,” so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called “the Church” (No. 760).

God began to add to his family with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but they ceased being his children and members of his family when they sinned. However, he began to gather together his people, his family, immediately after the Fall of Man. His covenants with Adam and Noah are the beginnings of this convocation. Convocation means to call together. The word “Church” means “convocation.” It designates the assembly of those whom God’s Word ‘convokes, i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ (No. 766). Therefore, the foundation for the Church—God’s Family—is laid with Adam and Eve.

The redemption of mankind occurred in stages. God gradually built up his Church—his family—in Salvation History. He started the redemption by making covenants (sacred agreements of a familial nature) with a couple (Adam and Eve), then a family (Noah and his family), then a tribe (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Chosen People), then a nation (Moses and the Israelites), then a kingdom (David and his kingdom), and finally the entire human race (Jesus and the People of God). Each covenant progressively added more peoples to God’s chosen people until the entire human race was invited. God’s family gets larger and larger as more and more people are included in each successive covenant. A covenant is a kinship agreement; it creates a family bond and love is the bond that makes and holds covenant relationships together. Although the various covenants had somewhat different provisions, basically God promised to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments.

You know the sordid story of Israel’s unfaithfulness to the covenants. They invariably broke their

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covenants by failing to worship God as the one true God and to obey his commandments when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenant with him, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they invariably didn't. After a period of punishment, they usually repented and returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time, God tired (speaking of God in an analogical sense) of this cycle and began to reveal through his prophets that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

God brought salvation to the world when his dearly beloved son, Jesus Christ instituted the New and Everlasting Covenant. God has always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that man could keep his end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a new and everlasting covenant on man's behalf.

In this regard the *Catechism* says “It was the Son’s task to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason for his being sent. The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures. To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The Church is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery” (No. 763). Moreover, the Church is “nothing other than 'the family of God” (No. 1655).

Jesus Christ founded a Church

Proof that Jesus Christ established a Church and not just a religion is found in the New Testament among the following places:

Jesus speaks frequently of his Kingdom in the New Testament in Matthew 25:34, Matthew 13:44-46, and John 18:36.

Jesus speaks of his flock in Luke:32, John 10:16, and John 21:17.

He calls his kingdom a Church in Matthew 16:18 and Matthew 18:17.

St. Luke describes in the Acts 14:23 the founding of specific churches by Paul and Barnabas.

A careful reading of the passages cited above and others makes it perfectly clear that Jesus founded a Church, not simply a religious association as Protestants have claimed. He founded a church to continue his presence in the world and to provide the means with which to distribute his graces and mercy.

Jesus Christ founded the Catholic Church

We know that He founded the Catholic Church because it contains the following marks or signs:

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Oneness: The Church founded by Jesus Christ must contain only one faith, the same sacrifice, the same sacraments, and the same visible head, the successor to St. Peter.

Holiness: The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be holy, because its founder and the Spirit that gives it life are holy; because her doctrines, her sacrifice, and her sacraments are holy; because her members are called to holiness; and because many of her members have achieved holiness.

Catholicity: Catholic means universal. The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be catholic, because she was instituted for all men, is suitable for all men, and has spread throughout the entire world.

Apostolicity: The Church founded by Jesus Christ must be apostolic, because she was founded upon the apostles and their preaching, and because she is governed by their successors, the bishops and popes.

Of all of the religions and churches in the world, only the Catholic Church contains all of these marks. The *Catechism* states regarding this matter, “The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1076). Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to institute his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—the Catholic Church—to continue his presence in the world through his sacraments and to preserve, transmit, and interpret his teachings, his Word—the Deposit of Faith. The new People of God are the members of the Catholic Church. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Other factors that identify the Catholic Church as the true church established by Jesus Christ are as follows:

- The Church even now maintains unity against all natural obstacles.
- She has remained stable over two thousand years in the face of every form of external attack.
- She has been able to propagate herself from the first under the most difficult of conditions.
- Her doctrine has been always sublime, her sacraments symbolic of the grace they confer, her authority conducive to the salvation of souls, her character unsurpassably holy.
- She has been marvelously fruitful in all manner of good works, projects, purposes and people since her foundation.
- The antiquity of the Church; no other institution in the world's history comes close to its longevity.
- The fact that the teachings of the Church have never changed over 2,000 years.
- The longevity of the Church in spite of its sinful members, including bad popes and bishops.
- The Church's phenomenal growth throughout the world.
- The holding power of its members.

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- The unity of its faith and worship for two millennia.
- The fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, schools, and aid to the poor.
- The sanctity of millions of its members over the centuries.
- The unbroken history of the Church from Jesus Christ to the present.
- The countless miracles attributed to the intercession of the Church.
- The Church has withstood the assaults of Godless totalitarian forces such as Nazism and Communism as no other institution has done.

The following are additional factors that should be considered in identifying the Catholic Church as the one established by Jesus Christ?

- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for evil in the world.
- The Church provides the only satisfactory explanation for who we are and what our destiny is.
- The Church provides meaning and purpose to our lives as no other institution has ever done.
- The Church provides the best explanation for suffering, sorrow, and death ever devised.
- The Church provides the only reasons for hope in a world of darkness and despair.
- The Church is the only institution in the world that fosters a culture of life.
- The Church is the world's only institution that teaches objective morality and traditional family values.

Any one of the factors considered in the above factors by itself might not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the authenticity of the Catholic Faith, but the weight of all of them put together provide irrefutable proof that the Catholic Church is the church established by Jesus Christ. Any person who knows these truths would be a fool if he or she didn't believe in the truth of the Catholic Faith and lived his or her life accordingly. None of the other world religions, except Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, claim to offer divine revelation and that their founders intended to establish churches. Christianity is, of course, the fulfillment of Judaism and Islam, in spite of its claims, is a manmade amalgamation of Christianity, Judaism, and Arabic paganism. All Protestant denominations have human founders and were not established until the sixteenth century and afterwards. Only the Catholic Church fully satisfies the four marks of the true church established by Jesus Christ to convey his revelation and to provide the means of salvation for the human race. Only the fullness of truth (the Deposit of Faith) is found in the Church founded by Jesus Christ and all graces needed for salvation are channeled through her (the Deposit of Grace).

All of this being said, it is important to reemphasize here that although the motives of credibility precede faith and dispose one to believe the truths of the Faith, they are not the cause of Divine Faith itself. This can't emphasize too much; faith is not a consequence of a careful study of the motives of credibility. In fact, the First Vatican Council expressly condemned this view. In this regard, the Council stated, "If anyone says that the assent of Christian faith is not free, but that it necessarily follows from the arguments which human reason can furnish in its favour . . . ; let him

be anathema” (Session. IV). Moreover, the Church has condemned the view that the motives of credibility can in themselves make clear the mysteries of faith. In this regard, St. Thomas says “the arguments which induce us to believe, e.g. miracles, do not prove the faith itself, but only the truthfulness of him who declares it to us, and consequently they do not beget knowledge of faith’s mysteries, but only faith.” On the other hand, we should not minimize the real ability of the motives of credibility to verify the truth of the gospel, for as Pope Leo XIII stated in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* “Reason declares that from the very outset the Gospel teaching was rendered conspicuous by signs and wonders which gave, as it were, definite proof of a definite truth.”

In the final analysis, it’s true then that faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. The Church has twice condemned the view that faith ultimately rests on an accumulation of probabilities. Thus the proposition, “The assent of supernatural faith . . . is consistent with merely probable knowledge of revelation” was condemned by Innocent XI in 1679 (Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 10th ed., no. 1171); and the “Syllabus of Errors” (*Lamentabili sane*, July, 1907) condemns the proposition (XXV) that “the assent of faith rests ultimately on an accumulation of probabilities.” Therefore, faith is essentially an act of assent, and would be impossible without a supernatural strengthening of the natural light of faith.

In other words, faith is a supernatural gift and is not the necessary outcome of assent to the motives of credibility. Motives of credibility simply make it reasonable to believe what God has revealed to be true, but only God can move the will to assent to what he has revealed. In fact, even after seeing the reasonableness of believing what God has revealed, one can still reject it. Faith is the free gift of God. Hence the First Vatican Council (III, iii;) teaches that, “faith is a supernatural virtue by which we with the inspiration and assistance of God’s grace, believe those things to be true which He has revealed.” The same decree goes on to say that “although the assent of faith is in no sense blind, yet no one can assent to the Gospel teaching in the way necessary for salvation without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who bestows on all a sweetness in believing and consenting to the truth.” The document continues by saying “The Catholic Church, (III, iv), “has always held that there is a twofold order of knowledge, and that these two orders are distinguished from one another not only in their principle but in their object; in one we know by natural reason, in the other by Divine faith; the object of the one is truth attainable by natural reason, the object of the other is mysteries hidden in God, but which we have to believe and which can only be known to us by Divine revelation.”

The Deposits of Faith and Grace

When Jesus instituted His Church, He gave it His teachings to preserve, transmit, and interpret. His teachings contain the fullness of truth, which contains everything on matters of faith and morals that are necessary for our salvation. These teachings are called the Deposit of Faith. When Jesus Christ suffered and died on the Cross, He earned infinite graces, which He deposited in His Church. This is called the Deposit of Grace. He distributes all of His graces, sanctifying and actual, through His Church.

When Jesus Christ founded his Church

The Trinity is a family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church finds its origins in the Holy Trinity. God created the entire universe and especially man to share in the Trinitarian life. God began to add to his family with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but they ceased being his children and members of his family when they sinned. However, he began to gather together his people, his family, immediately after the fall of man. His covenants with Adam and Noah are the beginnings of this convocation. Convocation means to call together. The word convocation means "church" Therefore, the foundation for the Catholic Church—God's Family—is laid with Adam and Eve.

God gradually built up his Church—his family—in Salvation History. He started the redemption by making covenants (sacred agreements of a familial nature) with a couple (Adam and Eve), then a family (Noah and his family), then a tribe (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their families), then a nation (Moses and the Israelites), then a kingdom (David and his kingdom), and finally the entire human race (Jesus Christ and the People of God). Each covenant progressively added more peoples to God's chosen people until the entire human race was included. God's family gets larger and larger as more and more people are included in each successive covenant. The foundation for the Catholic Church was thus laid in the Old Testament or Covenant. This included a priesthood and sacrifices, which prefigure the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ and His Sacrifice on the Cross.

Of this matter the *Catechism* states, "The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures. To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The Church is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery" (No. 763). Moreover, the Church is "nothing other than 'the family of God'" (No. 1655).

The Catholic Church was made known to the world on the day of Pentecost by the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit (*Catechism*, No. 1076). Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to institute his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—the Catholic Church—to continue his presence in the world through his sacraments and to preserve, transmit, and interpret his teachings, his Word—the Deposit of Faith. The new People of God are the members of the Catholic Church.

Two aspects of the Catholic Church

The visible or institutional aspect of the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church has a visible or institutional aspect and an invisible or spiritual aspect. The visible or institutional aspect of the Church is the part that we can see and is the part people all too often equate with the Church. Looking at it from a strictly sociological perspective, the Church is an institution consisting of a set of norms or rules integrated around a basic societal function or operation. The basic function of the Church is to give its members purpose and meaning to life and to explain who they are and to where they are going in the next life. To perform this huge and difficult task the Church has

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been organized in a similar manner to a large business, company, or the military. The type of organization employed by the Church to perform its huge job is called a bureaucracy. It has been said that the Catholic Church is the most bureaucratically organized institution in the world. Perhaps this is so because she has the biggest job of all to do, which is to save souls. Since a bureaucracy has such a big job to do, it has many rules and regulations (such as Canon Law, precepts of the Church, and doctrines) and is organized in a hierarchy of ranks or offices (such as Pope, bishops, priests, and laity). The ultimate Head of the Church is Jesus Christ, of course, but his visible head or vicar is the Pope.

Jesus invested Peter with the visible leadership of his Church, to be succeeded by the popes down through the ages. He invested the other Apostles and their successors with the office of bishop to assist Peter and his successors with the governance of the Church until he comes again in glory. In his role as Chief Priest, Jesus ordained his Apostles into the priest-hood at the Last Supper to represent him in his person, *in persona Christi*, and told them and their successors to continue the Eucharist in memory of him until the end of time. He instituted the sacraments to help the members of his family to be holy like him, especially the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, at which the priest represents him at the altar. The Church administers the sacraments, the chief means with which we receive God's sanctifying grace and actual graces. And his revelation, his holy Word, is found in the Holy Bible and Tradition. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church preserves, protects, transmits and through its Magisterium or teaching authority interprets God's revelation. The members of the visible part of the Church is the Church Militant, those of us who are still living here on earth trying to get to Heaven in the next life. Since the visible Church is made up of imperfect members who are sinners, the Church Militant is imperfect.

The Catholic Church is imperfect only to the extent that its living members, the Church Militant, are imperfect. This is the visible or human part of the Church made up of sinners. Because the visible Church Militant is made up of sinful members, she will reach perfection only at the end of time when all will be purified and the good separated from the bad—the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:32; Matthew 13:30). The *Catechism* says of the perfecting of the Church:

The Church . . . will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, at the time of Christ's glorious return. Until that day, the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world's persecutions and God's consolations. Here below she knows that she is in exile far from the Lord, and longs for the full coming of the Kingdom, when she will 'be united in glory with her king. The Church, and through her the world, will not be perfected in glory without great trials. Only then will 'all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect . . . be gathered together in the universal Church in the Father's presence (No. 769). The universe itself will be renewed: The Church . . . will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (No. 1042).

However, the visible part is only part of the Church. The invisible part is equally as important as

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the visible. The invisible part is the part that gives the Church life and is perfect. To have one's faith built on a rock, it is vital that he or she understand this. One's faith is built on shifting sands if he or she equates the Church only with the visible part consisting of the sinful members. Looking at the Church only from this perspective all too often causes Catholics to view their Church as just a human creation like all other institutions, and not the divine Body that she is, the Mystical Body of Christ.

The invisible or spiritual aspect of the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church is perfect in the following ways:

- The sacraments with which to beget and nurture her children;
- The purity and the fullness of truth of her teachings;
- Her holy precepts or laws;
- The evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience;
- The heavenly gifts and miraculous powers that have produced countless martyrs and saints through the ages.

The invisible aspect of the Church is the spiritual part, which consists of the following: the Mystical Body of Christ; the Bride of Christ; the Temple of Holy Spirit; and God's entire family, headed by Christ and composed of the People of God, which includes the Church Militant, the Church Suffering, and the Church Triumphant.

The Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ

The Church Militant is the society of all the faithful still dwelling on earth. It is called militant, because it members wage continuous war against our enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The *Catechism* of the Council of Trent states that, "The Church militant is composed of two classes of persons, the good and the bad, both professing the same faith and partaking of the same Sacraments, yet differing in their manner of life and morality." Although both the good and the bad belong to the Church, their condition is very different. As the parable tells us, the bad are kept in the Church as "the chaff is mingled with the grain on the threshing floor", but will be cast out into the fire at the end of time. Thus it is in the visible Church Militant that are found the Church's imperfect members.

Since nothing unclean can enter Heaven, anyone who dies less than perfect must first be purified before he or she can be admitted to the beatific vision of God. For this reason there exists an intermediate state between Heaven and earth called Purgatory. It is here that imperfect members are found in the invisible Church. There the souls who die in God's friendship before paying for the damage caused by their sins are cleansed or purged before they are admitted to Heaven. In Purgatory they suffer to make amends or give satisfaction for wrongs done. Once they have paid their debt they are admitted into Heaven to enjoy the beatific vision of God and all of the joys and benefits that he has prepared for them. They can be helped, however, by the intercessory prayers

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of the souls in Heaven and the intercessory prayers and sacrifices of the faithful on earth.

The Church Triumphant is composed of the souls who have won the victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and now enjoy everlasting bliss in Heaven with God. They see God face to face in the beatific vision and enjoy all of the joys and benefits that God has prepared for them. They are the saints in Heaven. The *Catechism* says that “The Church triumphant is that most glorious and happy assemblage of blessed spirits, and of those who have triumphed.”

Pope Pius XII said, “If we would define and describe the true Church of Jesus Christ—which is the one, holy, Catholic, apostolic Roman Church—we shall find nothing more noble, more sublime, or more divine than the expression ‘the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ’—an expression that flows spontaneously from the repeated teaching of the sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers” (*Mystici Corporis*, On the Mystical Body of Christ and Our Union in it with Christ, Encyclical Letter by Pope Pius XII).

The Catholic Church is Christ's Mystical Body on earth; he is its head and we are its members. The Church's membership—the People or Family of God—consists of the saints in Heaven (the Church Triumphant), the souls in Purgatory (the Church Suffering), and those living on earth (the Church Militant). The body is united to the head constituting the Mystical Body of Christ—the Catholic Church. The Mystical Body of Christ is the perfect aspect of the Catholic Church.

The Church gets this name from the analogy used by St. Paul, where he says of Christians: “You are the Body of Christ, member for member” (I Corinthians 12:27), and of Christ: “the Head of His Body, the Church” (Colossians 1:18). To illustrate this analogy: the Church has a multiplicity of observable members, because all bodies possess inter-dependent parts. Just as a natural body is made up of different organs with different functions arranged in a particular order, the Church is held together by structurally interdependent parts. This interdependence is called the hierarchy, which has ranks or graded levels of orders and jurisdiction, of superiors and subjects, from the Pope down to the laity.

The Church is called Mystical because she is a mystery, which God revealed to be true. By Mystical, is meant that much of its meaning is hidden. Since Jesus Christ has established the Church—His Mystical Body—we must accept it on faith, without fully understanding its meaning. The Roman Catholic Church is mainly said to be the Mystical Body of Christ because it is sacramental. The Church is the great sacrament of the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Christ for the communication of his invisible grace to the whole world.

The Catholic Church is the Bride of Christ

Since we are one body, Christ's love for the People of God is so great that the relationship is compared to the sacramental bond of marriage. John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Bridegroom (John 3:29) as does St. Paul (Ephesians 5:32). And Jesus referred to himself as the Bridegroom

and his Church as the Bride (Matthew 25:1). The bond between the head and the members is analogous to the bond of sacramental marriage, because both are united in “one flesh.” The *Catechism* says of this unity:

The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride. The theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist. The Lord referred to himself as the 'bridegroom.' The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride 'betrothed' to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him. The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb. 'Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her.' He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body (No. 796).

The Catholic Church is our Mother—Holy Mother Church

The Bride of Christ is also our mother—Holy Mother Church. The *Catechism* says that, “because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother: We believe the Church as the mother of our new birth” (No. 169), that is, our baptism which gives new life. Moreover, “the Church indeed . . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life” (*Catechism*, No. 507). As a human mother nourishes her children, Holy Mother Church provides us with spiritual nourishment with her sacraments, by teaching us how to pray, and by other means.

The Catholic Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Mystical Body of Christ—the Catholic Church. What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The *Catechism* says of this matter, “To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members.” In continuation, “The Holy Spirit makes the Church ‘the temple of the living God.’ Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the ‘Gift of God’ has been entrusted. . . . In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God. . . . For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace” (No. 797). The Church is Jesus' Mystical Body. Wherever Jesus is, there is his Spirit. Just as the human soul forms the human body and gives it life, the Holy Spirit forms the Church and gives it life. Unlike the human person who will die when his or her soul leaves the body, the Church will

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never die, because the Holy Spirit will never abandon the Mystical Body of the Church, for Christ has promised to be with his Church until the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

The Catholic Church is God's People or Family

We become members of the Catholic Church—the Family of God—at baptism. Baptism restores the sonship or daughterhood lost by Adam and Eve and makes us adopted sons or daughters of God the Father and brothers or sisters of his Son Jesus; it gives us a share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. God is Father to the Church, Jesus is brother to all of us, and Heaven, his home, is our home, for the Church is Heaven brought to earth. His home becomes our home; his Father becomes our Father; his brothers and sisters become our brothers and sisters; and His Mother, Mary, becomes our mother as well. She is mother of the Church because the Church is the Mystical Body of her son, Jesus. St. Paul says of our sonship with God the Father:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:14-17).

The Catholic Church is the Communion of Saints

The *Catechism* tells us that the term “communion of saints” has two closely related meanings: communion in holy things and communion among holy persons. The communion in holy things especially refers to the Eucharist by which “the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about” (No. 960). The communion among holy persons refers to the intercommunion of all those who are faithful to Jesus Christ, including those who are pilgrims on earth (the Church Militant), the dead who are being purified (the Church Suffering), and the blessed in Heaven (the Church Triumphant), who all together form one Church.

The Church Militant are those of us on earth who are striving to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and achieve sainthood in Heaven with the Trinitarian Family forever. We share together a communion in the faith, which “is the faith of the Church, received from the apostles” (*Catechism* No. 949).

We also share a communion of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The sacraments unite the faithful “with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ, and above all Baptism, the gate by which we enter into the Church” (*Catechism* No. 950). Furthermore, we share a communion of charisms or gifts, which are distributed by the Holy Spirit to build up the Church. Of this matter the *Catechism* states, “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (No. 951).

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Finally, we share a communion in charity, for none of us lives and dies to himself. The *Catechism* says of this, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. Charity does not insist on its own way.” (No 953).

Charity—love of God and neighbor—is the bond that unifies the Communion of Saints. We show our love of God by worshipping him and doing good for our neighbor. The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are the principle means with which the three parts of the Body of Christ fulfill their obligation to love one another. The members of the Church Militant look after the bodily and spiritual needs of each other. Moreover, they pray and apply sacrifices for the benefit of the poor souls in Purgatory—the Church Suffering. Although the suffering souls cannot help themselves, they pray for the Church Militant who are trying to win the battle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The triumphant souls in Heaven intercede for the poor souls in Purgatory and for the bodily and spiritual needs of the Church Militant.

The Communion of Saints—the Body united to its Head, Jesus Christ—is the Church, which is Mystical Body of Christ. In this regard, the *Catechism* says, “What is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints? The communion of saints is the Church” (No. 946).

The Catholic Church is infallible

Infallibility means free from error, excluding not only its existence but even its possibility. The Church is infallible when the Pope or Church councils in communion with him speak on matters of Faith or morals. They are preserved from error by an influx of divine grace, which enlightens the mind and, if necessary, strengthens the will in order to insure inerrancy. Infallibility does not mean preservation from sin. This is impeccability. Only the Blessed Mother is free from sin, that is, impeccable or immaculate.

The *Catechism* says of infallibility:

The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith - he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. . . . The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine 'for belief as being divinely revealed,' and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions 'must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.' This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself (No.891).

Fr. Hardon says in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* in regard to infallibility:

[Infallibility is] Freedom from error in teaching the universal Church in matters of faith or morals. As defined by the First Vatican Council, “The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex

cathedra—that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and therefore such definitions are irreformable of themselves, and not in virtue of consent of the Church (Denzinger 3074). . . . The condition of the infallibility is that the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*. For this is required that: 1. he have the intention of declaring something unchangeably true; and 2. he speak as shepherd and teacher of all the faithful with the full weight of his apostolic authority, and not merely as a private theologian or even merely for the people of Rome or some particular segment of the Church of God.

The Church is indefectible

Christ has promised to be with His Church “all days, even unto the consummation of the world” (Matthew 28:20). Since the Church cannot fail, it is indefectible. Fr. Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that indefectibility is:

Imperishable duration of the Church and her immutability until the end of time. The First Vatican Council declared that the Church possesses “an unconquered stability” and that, “built on a rock, she will continue to stand until the end of time” (Denzinger 3013, 3056). The Church's indefectibility, therefore, means that she now is and will always remain the institution of salvation, founded by Christ. This affirms that the Church is essentially unchangeable in her teaching, her constitution, and her liturgy. It does not exclude modifications that do not affect her substance, nor does it exclude the decay of individual local churches or even whole dioceses.

The Catholic Church's magisterium

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church preserves, protects, transmits and through its Magisterium or teaching authority interprets God's revelation. The extraordinary magisterium is exercised by the Church when the Pope or Bishops at general councils in communion with the Pope define *ex cathedra* (from the Chair of Peter) that certain doctrines are infallible.

The ordinary magisterium of the Church is exercised when the Pope or Bishops in communion with him speak on matters of Faith and morals as they perform their teaching role as pastors of the universal Church. Of the Church's ordinary magisterium the *Catechism* states:

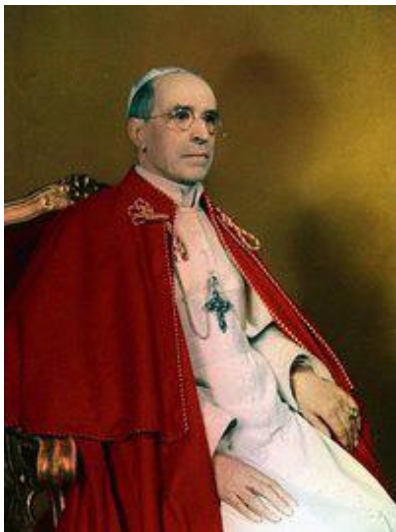
Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a “definitive manner” they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a

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teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful “are to adhere to it with religious assent” which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it (No. 892).

The ordinary teaching authority of the Church is in the normal teaching of the Faith to the faithful in schools, sermons, catechesis, and all the other kinds of instruction. This is the normal way in which moral norms are taught, with definitions by Pope or general councils the exception; nonetheless, the ordinary teaching authority of the Pope and Bishops in communion with him is binding on the faithful in conscience just as is the teaching through the extraordinary magisterium. The Magisterium of the Pastors of the Church in moral matters is ordinarily exercised with the help of the works of theologians and spiritual authors.

The role of the Pope in the Catholic Church



The Pope is Christ's vicar or representative on earth. His role is to teach the faithful, govern them, and to provide them with the means of achieving sanctity or holiness. The first Pope was Simon Peter and he has had 265 successors to this day. Jesus Christ commissioned him to be the first Pope when He said at Caesarea Philippi, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:13-19). The *Catechism* says of the Pope's role, “The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, is the perpetual and visible source

and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered” (No. 882).

The Bishops of the Catholic Church

The Bishop is the supreme ecclesiastical ruler of a diocese. Bishops are the successors of the Apostles, as the Pope is the successor of Saint Peter. For the affairs of their own dioceses they are responsible directly to the pope. They govern their flocks in the name of God as representatives of Christ; they are not delegates of the Holy See, though they are subject to its authority, but exercise their own powers by virtue of their office. They do not enjoy personal infallibility, but collectively, in union with the pope, they are infallible. The word itself originally means an overseer or guard-

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ian, and in this meaning it is used in 1 Peter 2:25. Bishops were constituted in the early Church and ordained by the sacramental rite of the laying on of hands by the Apostles. The office of bishops is of divine institution, and they were empowered to ordain other bishops and priests (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 1:3; 3:1-7; 4:11-14; 5:1 ff.; Titus 1:5-14). That bishops in the early Church, just as at the present day, were appointed to preside over the various local divisions of the Church and endowed with real ruling power is clear from several New Testament verses (1 Thess. 5:12; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:14).

Under the law now in force in the Church the appointment of bishops belongs exclusively to the Holy See, and a bishop-elect must be consecrated by a Catholic bishop assisted by two other Catholic bishops. Bishops today are either residential or titular. The former are at the heads of actual functioning dioceses, and the latter are given the title of some ancient diocese which is now extinct and are appointed to assist residential bishops either as auxiliaries or coadjutors, or to fulfill some other important ecclesiastical post (e.g., a papal diplomat).

There no salvation outside the Catholic Church

All baptized persons are members of Christ's Mystical Body, the People or Family of God, which is another name for the Catholic Church. There is a very old saying that there is "No salvation outside the Catholic Church"; however, this does not mean that every person who is saved must be an active baptized member of the Church. God loves everyone and Jesus Christ died on the Cross so that all might be saved. God provided other ways for non-Catholics and non-Christians to be baptized and saved. Many Protestant Christian denominations practice baptism with the same intention as do we Catholics; therefore, the Catholic Church recognizes their baptisms as valid.. Protestant Christians who do not practice baptism and non-Christians who do not possess the sacrament of baptism can achieve baptism by desire or martyrdom. The baptism of desire means that all who try to do what they believe to be the right thing in accordance with their consciences and the natural law (God's law written on their hearts) and who desire to live in God's friendship (whatever their concept of God might be) and be in union with him undergo a baptism of desire and as a result are part of the Trinitarian Family. They would desire sacramental baptism in the Catholic Church if they knew that it is the true Church of Jesus Christ. The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* informs us that the baptism of desire is:

The equivalent sacramental baptism of water, which in God's providence is sufficient to enable a person to obtain the state of grace and to save his or her soul. According to the Church's teaching, "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictate of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation" (Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Church, I, 16).

According to the *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

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Martyrdom in the case of a person who died for the Christian faith before he or she could receive the sacrament. The effects of martyrdom of blood are the complete remission of sin and the title to immediate entrance into heaven. The expression entered the Christian vocabulary during the first three centuries when many catechumens awaiting baptism and pagans suddenly converted to the Christian faith were martyred before they could receive formal baptism of water.

Martyrdom, or a baptism of blood, is giving one's life to please God and to achieve union and friendship with him forever.

Jesus deposited all of his teachings and graces needed for salvation in his Church, his Mystical Body. Therefore, all truth and graces flow from the Church He established. This means that whatever truth other religions possess flows from the Church. This also means that all graces flow from the Church to other religions. It simply makes sense that if Jesus did establish a Church, and Catholics believe that the evidence is overwhelming that He did, He would direct all truth and graces through the Church he established.

The Church as Sacrament

The *Catechism* tells us:

The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men. The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of men with God. Because men's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the unity of the human race. In her, this unity is already begun, since she gathers men from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues; at the same time, the Church is the sign and instrument of the full realization of the unity yet to come (No. 775).

Furthermore:

As sacrament, the Church is Christ's instrument. She is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all, 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' by which Christ is 'at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for men.' The Church 'is the visible plan of God's love for humanity,' because God desires 'that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit (No. 776).

The Catholic Priesthood



Sacrifice and priesthood go together; no sacrifice, no priesthood. Sacrifice means to give up something of value: time, talents, material goods, even the ultimate sacrifice, one's life for the love of God. That which is given up is the victim. Not only must it be given up, it must be destroyed or used up. For instance, when one sacrifices time for others, he gives up his time, in effect, he destroys it for use himself. When one gives up material possessions for the benefit of others, he denies himself the use of them. To sacrifice things in the religious sense means to offer them up to God; to

give them back to him. They can be given back to God, sacrificed that is, in thanks, praise, contrition, appeasement, etc.

The supreme sacrifice was, of course, the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross for the salvation of the world. Jesus was both the High Priest offering the sacrifice and the victim, giving up his life for the benefit of others. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice as that Jesus made on the Cross to satisfy the needs of mankind for sacrifice and as the means with which the fruits of the Redemption might be applied to people for the remission of their sins. Jesus is the High Priest of the Mass, but he is represented at the altar by his ordained ministerial priesthood in his person (*in persona Christi capitis*).

The Priesthood of the Old Covenant

Sacrifice was the most important part of the worship of the Israelites. They practiced two types of sacrifice: those that shed the blood of animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, or doves; and unbloody, such as grain or vegetables and fruits. For bloody sacrifices only one's own animals were used. The animal had to be male and could not be unclean, defective, or stolen. The sacrificial ceremony usually consisted of the following steps: (1) the animal was brought to the door of the Tabernacle; (2) the priests placed their hands on the animal to symbolize the transfer of the sins of the offerer to the animal; (3) the animal (victim) was slain; (4) its blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the offerer; (5) the animal's flesh was burned in whole or in part. If only part of the animal was burnt, a sacrificial meal followed in which the offerer showed his friendship with God by eating the victim animal. The procedure of burning the whole animal is called holocaust. The victim animal was not completely burned in sin and guilt offerings; the remaining parts were reserved for the use of the priests. These offerings were made to atone for the offerer's sins. Moreover, only a part of the animal was burned in peace offerings. These were offered to thank God for favors or to ask him for them.

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Grain and wine were offered as unbloody sacrifices. The grain was in the form of pure flour, ears of grain, unleavened bread, or cakes. They were often joined to the holocausts and peace offerings, but sometimes they were offered separately.

The priesthood and sacrifices of the Old Covenant (the Old Testament) prefigures the High priesthood of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross of the New and Everlasting Covenant (the New Testament). The *Catechism* says of the Jewish priesthood:

The chosen people was constituted by God as “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance. A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are 'appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins' (No. 1539) . . . Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer, this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish (No. 1540). . . The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders, a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant (No. 1541).



The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ of the New and Everlasting Covenant

Jesus Christ is both the High Priest and the victim in the New and Everlasting Covenant. He is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice and the victim who is offered. In regard to this truth, the *Catechism* states, “Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the ‘one mediator between God and men.’ The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, priest of God Most High,’ as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique ‘high priest after the order of Melchizedek’; ‘holy, blameless, unstained, by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified, that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross” (No. 1544).

Furthermore, “The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: “Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers” (No.

1545). Moreover, the *Catechism* states:

In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*. It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*) (No. 1548).

When the priest says the words of consecration or absolution, it is truly Christ who is speaking.

The Ordained Priesthood

Although the ordained ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ, they differ in their respective roles. The *Catechism* says of the difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the laity: "The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*)" (No. 1592).

The ordained priesthood is ministerial; that is, a role of ordained priests is to minister to the spiritual needs of their congregations. The *Catechism* says of this matter:

That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service. It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him" (No. 1551). [In addition] the ordained priesthood is sacerdotal; that is, another role of ordained priests is to administer the sacraments as a representative of Jesus Christ. The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ—Head of the Church—before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice (No. 1552).

Only the ordained priest can represent Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in his name in the confessional.

The Priesthood of the Laity

All of us share in Jesus' priesthood in some manner. God had promised Moses as part of his covenant with the Israelites that "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This priesthood has been continued in the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ with the People of God. The Priesthood of the Laity is sometimes referred to as the Priesthood of All Believers. Regarding the laity's priesthood, the *Catechism* states:

Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church 'a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.' The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood" (No. 1546).

The layperson can perform his or her priestly role in many ways. Simply by performing well one's vocation as husband, wife, child, worker, etc., one bears witness to the Christian Faith. Performing some of the many ministries open to the laity, such as catechist, server, reader, commentator, cantor, choir member, and other liturgical functions as well as various other parish ministries is another way of witnessing our faith. Participating in social service and charitable activities is another priestly role. And let us not forget the sacrifices we offer to God at Holy Mass. As long as we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of God and the benefit of others, as long as we give of ourselves—time, talent, and treasure—for the love of God and neighbor, we are performing a priestly role. And, of course the most important sacrifices we make is when we unite our suffering, sorrow, time, talent, and treasure to Jesus' at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When our imperfect sacrifices are united to his perfect sacrifice, they become wholly acceptable to God the Father. The words of the priest when he turns to the congregation after the Offertory perfectly expresses this idea: "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

To close our discussion of the Catholic Church, its continuous existence over the centuries—its survival of the onslaughts of its enemies from without and within during that time—is the most certain proof of the truth of Christianity; it is by far the greatest miracle of all time. The Church is living witness to the truth of Salvation History. The Catholic Faith is a fantastic one, yet it's all true. The Church was there to witness the events described in the Bible, wrote them down, and transmitted them down through the ages for our benefit.

This is the reason that we should never lose faith over the sins of its members. The Church is infinitely greater than its sinful members. Moreover, the Church is the only institution that has satisfactory answers for every question that has ever perplexed man. Although the Church Militant is comprised of fallible human beings, the Church is a divine living body, the Mystical Body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the head and we are the members; it is not a fallible human

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institution. It is infallible in matters of faith and morals, because it is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The actions of sinful members of the Church should not weaken or destroy our faith. Sometimes people lose faith or at least have it shaken when they hear of scandals in the Church. If one's faith is based on the belief that the Church consists only of the visible institutional Church made up of its sinful members, his or her faith is built on sand, which is not a solid foundation. If one truly understands what the Church is—in its fullest dimensions of the imperfect visible, institutional Church and the perfect invisible aspects—he will never have his faith shaken by the misbehavior of sinful members, who are simply not living up to the standards that Jesus set for them. We shouldn't let scandals and teachings that are difficult to accept—"hard sayings"—weaken or destroy your faith. The Church is infinitely greater than its sinful members, including a few notoriously sinful priests. Recall that even his Apostles didn't have a very good record: Judas betrayed Jesus; Peter denied him; Thomas doubted him; and they all ran away when he was arrested. The Church is an infallible divine body, the Mystical Body of Christ, of which he is the Head and we—the Church Militant—are the sinful members; it is not a fallible human institution. Keep in mind that the Church also consists of the Church Suffering (the souls in Purgatory who have won the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil and are being purified for entrance into Heaven) and the Church Triumphant (the souls in Heaven) as well as the Sacraments (the principal means of God's grace), and the Word of God (Sacred Tradition and Scripture). The Church is God's presence in the world and is made up of God's Family. When one looks at the Church this way, it is almost impossible not to believe in the truth of the Church and to consider oneself blessed to be a member.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins



Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation. The Nicene Creed that Catholics profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass states: We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist told the crowds that the one who was coming after him would baptize not with water alone, but with water and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:15-16). The Bible says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark. 16:16). Jesus said to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5). He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them (Matthew 28:19). The *Catechism* tells us that

“The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. It states that “In accordance with the Lord’s will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism” (No.1277). It states elsewhere that “The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit’” (No. 1257). Numerous other places in the Bible make reference to the need for Baptism (For examples see: Titus 3:5; Acts 2:37-38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; Gal. 3:27; Hebrews 10:22).

Baptism by Desire or Blood: The Church teaches that for those, through who no fault of their own, who do not undergo baptism of water can achieve God’s sanctifying grace and membership into his family by a Baptism of desire or of blood. The baptism of desire applies both to “those who, while wishing to be baptized, die before receiving the sacrament” and “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of conscience” (Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council). The *Catechism* states, “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (No. 1259). Furthermore, “Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized” (No. 1281). Regarding the Baptism of blood, the *Catechism* says:

The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of

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Baptism without being a sacrament" (No. 1258). The Baptism of blood refers to the martyrdom of those believers who were killed for the faith before they had a chance to be baptized. This was a common occurrence in the early centuries of the Church, but also in later times in missionary lands. The baptism of blood has the same effects as the baptism of water.



Baptism of Blood (Martyrdom)

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

The world of time and space in which we live will one day come to an end. Of course, it ends for each of us the day we die and enter eternity. When the end of time comes for the entire human race, the dead will rise from the grave and Jesus Christ will appear in all of his glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23; Matthew 10:21-24; 16:27; Mark 8:38; 13:26; Luke 9:26; 21:27). The *Catechism* tells us that “On Judgment Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history” (No. 681).

In connection with the end of time are to be the “Last Things”: Judgment (particular and general), Purgatory, Heaven, and Hell. The study of these things is called eschatology. We will examine each of these concepts in turn. We must first consider death and the particular judgment to set the stage for what is to happen at the end of time when our Lord comes again in all of his glory.

The meaning of death

Although Jesus redeemed us by his suffering and death, we all must suffer from the consequences of sin. St. Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Death is the separation of the soul from the body, which God never originally intended. Regarding this matter, the *Catechism* states:

Death is a consequence of sin. The Church's *Magisterium*, as authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin. Even though man's nature is mortal, God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin. Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned is thus 'the last enemy' of man left to be conquered (No. 1008).

God had created Adam and Eve and all of their children to be members of his family and to live forever in heavenly bliss. But they failed to pass the test of familial loyalty when they ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Consequently, they lost their place in God's family, were disinherited, and became subject to death.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father, “came into the world to restore our lives and sonship in the Family of God. The *Catechism* says of death: “Death is transformed by Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing” (No. 1009).

In other words, because of the death of Jesus Christ, death has taken on a positive meaning to Christians. Death can become the gateway to Heaven. Elsewhere the *Catechism* says of death, “

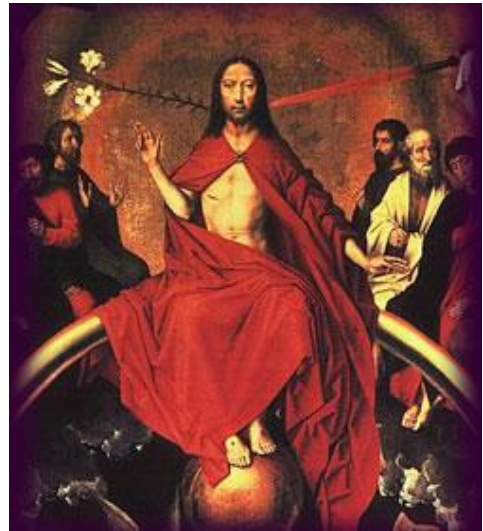
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“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him. What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already ‘died with Christ’ sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this 'dying with Christ, and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act:” (No. 1010).

By sacramental death we mean that when we are baptized, the old sinful self dies—the self burdened with Original Sin—and a new self is born again to live a new life in Christ. When one dies a physical death in God's grace, he dies in God's friendship and will live forever as an adopted son or daughter in the divine family. Of this rebirth Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

The Particular Judgment

After death, the next of the Last Things is the Particular Judgment. Jesus will judge us right after our deaths. When we die the curtain that separates us from him will go up and there he will be sitting on his throne to judge us. This is the particular or private judgment. The way Jesus judges us will depend on how we have lived our lives while on earth: how well we have obeyed his commandments and abided by his will; how well we have fulfilled the responsibilities of our vocations; how well we have been good stewards of the talents God has given us; and how well we have served the least of our brethren.



Jesus will judge us on how well we have used our time, our talents, and our treasure in service to him and our neighbor. If we have tried our best to obey God's commandments, to do his will, we will be rewarded with eternal life in Heaven; if we have purposely disobeyed his commandments and are unrepentant, we will be forever condemned to Hell. The choice is entirely ours. Let's hope and pray that when we face him at the particular judgment we will hear him say, “Well done good and faithful servant.” In a sense, Jesus doesn't condemn the damned, they condemn themselves and know that they deserve their punishment.

After the particular judgment, those who are in union with Christ at death will go directly to Heaven. Those who die in God's friendship, but have debts to pay for the damage caused by their sins will go immediately to Purgatory, then to Heaven whenever their debts are paid in full. Those who do not die in God's friendship, who die in a state of mortal sin, go directly to Hell forever. Heaven is eternal life; Hell is eternal death.

Purgatory

Fr. John Hardon informs us in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that purgatory is:

The place or condition in which the souls of the just are purified after death and before they can enter heaven. They may be purified of the guilt of their venial sins, as in this life, by an act of contrition deriving from charity and performed with the help of grace. This sorrow does not, however, affect the punishment for sins, because in the next world there is no longer any possibility of merit. The souls are certainly purified by atoning for the temporal punishments due to sin by their willing acceptance of suffering imposed by God. The sufferings in purgatory are not the same for all, but proportioned to each person's degree of sinfulness. Moreover, these sufferings can be lessened in duration and intensity through the prayers and good works of the faithful on earth. Nor are the pains incompatible with great peace and joy, since the poor souls deeply love God and are sure they will reach heaven. As members of the Church Suffering, the souls in purgatory can intercede for the persons on earth, who are therefore encouraged to invoke their aid. Purgatory will not continue after the general judgment, but its duration for any particular souls continues until it is free from all guilt and punishment. Immediately on purification the soul is assumed into heaven. (Etym. Latin *purgatio*, cleansing, purifying.)

The reason for Purgatory is that nothing unclean can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Revelation 21:27). Persons who die in the state of sanctifying grace—which means that the Holy Trinity is dwelling in their souls—but haven't paid for all of the damage caused by their sins in this life, can't enter Heaven until they have satisfied that debt. The Catholic Church has always referred to the following text in 2 Maccabees as biblical proof for the doctrine of Purgatory:

Expiation for the Dead. Judas rallied his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the seventh day was approaching, they purified themselves according to custom and kept the sabbath there. On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his companions went to gather up the bodies of the fallen and bury them with their kindred in their ancestral tombs. But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection in mind; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin (2 Maccabees 12:38-46).

Heaven

No words could ever describe Heaven, because human experience cannot comprehend the joys to be experienced there. Saints who have been given visions of Heaven could not describe it. St. Paul, who was granted a vision of Heaven, could not tell us what it is like. All he could say was “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). For those in Heaven, Jesus has said in a private revelation, “you shall have more than you have ever desired, more than you ever imagined. You will never know the end of your joy, nor will you be tormented by the fear of losing what you love. You will always have what you want, and you will always want what is best. You will share My [God's] knowledge, and My happiness will fill your soul. In Heaven no one shall ever have reason to complain about you. No one will resist you nor spoil your plans. You will enjoy at one and the same time all the things you love. . .” (*My Daily Bread, The Way of Union, Union Throughout the Day, Chapter 19, “Looking Forward to Heaven”*). The *Catechism* says of Heaven, “Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they ‘see him as he is,’ face to face:” (No. 1023).

Those in Heaven live in intimate communication with the Family of God forever: with the Trinity; our Blessed Mother, Mary; and all of the saints and angels, including our loved ones here on earth who make it to Heaven. Describing this heavenly bliss, the *Catechism* states, “This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called heaven. Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (No. 1024). Elsewhere the *Catechism* says, “This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise:” (No. 1027).

The greatest benefit of Heaven is seeing God face to face as he is. The *Catechism* tells us of this benefit by saying, “Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory ‘the beatific vision’: How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honored with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God, . . . to delight in the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of heaven with the righteous and God's friends” (No. 1028).

The Beatific Vision is fully sharing in the divine nature. God made man in his image and likeness, which makes us literally sharers in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). This is accomplished by what is called sanctifying grace. Grace elevates our human nature to the supernatural level and transforms the soul, making it capable of seeing God “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12). This is, of course, beyond our understanding, because God has no face and our souls have no eyes with which to see. When we look at other humans, we do not absorb them into our minds, but instead we form an image of them in our minds.

When we see others, what we are “seeing” of them is indirect. The image of others is finite or limited, and so are they. However, God is infinite or limitless. Since he is infinite, no image, which is finite, could begin to be sufficient. The only way that we can see God “face to face” is for him to directly join himself directly to our minds or souls with no image in between. Only a being that is at least part divine would be capable of this union. Only human souls in the state of sanctifying grace are capable of sharing in the divine nature. The human being in the state of sanctifying grace, that is God is living in his or her soul, is capable of contemplating God. In this regard, St John tells us that, “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Sanctifying grace transforms the soul, making it capable of joining the infinite knowledge and love of God. This ability begins in this life at our baptisms. Baptism cleansed us of the stain of Original Sin and made us temples of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity came to dwell in our souls. This makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his Son Jesus as well as heirs to Heaven. We are members of God's family, his Church. However, we can achieve full union with God only in the next life, and then only after our souls have undergone whatever cleansing that might be necessary in Purgatory. But since the vision of God is infinite, and we are finite, we have unlimited capacity to increase sanctifying grace in our souls. We can do this by a lifetime of study and meditation on the Faith, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the development of the virtues, the performance of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, continual prayer and penance, and loving God with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength. Achieving Heaven fulfills our longing for God. To quote the great St. Augustine in this regard, “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (*Confessions 1,1*). We often look forward to getting or achieving more things, foolishly thinking that they will satisfy us, but we soon tire of them or find them less satisfying than when we get or achieve them. Anticipation is always greater than realization. Nothing less than God himself can really satisfy us. Only those who go to Heaven will rest in peace. Those who fail to achieve Heaven and go to Hell never find rest.

Since those who fail to achieve Heaven and go to Hell never find rest, what other sufferings must the souls of the damned undergo in Hell? Jesus came into the world to save it, not to condemn it. He offers salvation to all persons and desires that all be saved. Man was made for Heaven, to live with God's family forever. Jesus does not condemn those who go to Hell, they choose to go there themselves. He merely pronounces sentence on what sinful persons have chosen for themselves. The *Catechism* says of this matter, “Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgment on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He 'acquired' this right by his cross. The Father has given 'all judgment to the Son'. Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself. By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love” (No. 679). Jesus said of this rejection, “Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10). He means here that anyone who refuses his grace and mercy to the end of his life cannot be saved. God is not going to violate our free will and force us to accept him. If we reject him, not even God can save us.

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Hell

The *Catechism* defines Hell as “The state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed, reserved for those who refuse by their own free choice to believe and be converted from sin, even to the end of their lives” (Glossary, Hell). Hell is a real place; it is a fact. Jesus Christ our Lord told us this time and again during his earthly life. Anyone who denies this fact is simply rejecting Jesus’ teachings.

Fr. Hardon says in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that Hell is:

The place and state of eternal punishment for the fallen angels and human beings who die deliberately estranged from the love of God. There is a twofold punishment in hell: the pain of loss, which consists in the deprivation of the vision of God, and the pain of sense, which consists in the suffering caused by outside material things. The punishment of hell is eternal, as declared by Christ in his prediction of the last day (Matthew 25:46), and as defined by the Fourth Lateran Council, stating that the wicked will receive a perpetual punishment with the devil (Denzinger 801). The existence of hell is consistent with divine justice, since God respects human freedom and those who are lost actually condemn themselves by their resistance to the grace of God.

There are some modern theologians who deny that Hell exists, that everyone ends up going to Heaven in the final analysis. The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* states that the New Testament makes it very clear that:

Hell is a reality, not just a figure of speech, and that its torments are unimaginably severe and everlasting. The intensity of the suffering in Hell will depend upon the number and greatness of sins committed, and there will never be any lessening of that suffering. The greatest grief results from being separated from God, for the damned realize that they had been created only for God and because of their own foolishness and pride they have lost him (Matt. 7:23; 25:10, 41). There is an additional punishment which God created, which we can call hell-fire (Matt. 13:42; 18:9). This fire is some agent outside the souls of the damned and causes them real pain in and suffering. God manifested His justice by creating an eternal hell, for the evil of a mortal sin is unlimited, and so the punishment for it must be without end (Hell).

Since Hell is a real place where the damned go, how did it come about? Originally God created Hell for the devil and his rebel angels, but human beings who reject God also go there for eternity. There is nothing on earth like Hell. It is infinitely worse than the worst conditions on earth; there are no adequate words to describe it. Man's sufferings in this life are nothing in comparison with the sufferings of Hell. Jesus is reported to have said of Hell in a personal apparition:

The wise man would rather bear any trial on earth than place himself in danger of hell. One single hour of hell will be harder than a hundred years of suffering on earth. In this earthly life people have some rest from their labors and trials. They get some measure of conso-

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lation from their friends. In hell, however, there is no rest, no consolation, and no friends. The sufferings of Hell never end. . . . One will find no comfort in knowing that he has been there a thousand years. He can never hope for an end to his tortures. All the other sufferings would be bearable if only the damned could hope for relief. Despair is hell's bitterest pain" (*My Daily Bread*, Way of Purification, Conversion, Chapter 20, "The Pains of Hell").

The Blessed Mother let the children of the Fatima apparitions to see into Hell. The vision was so terrible that they spent the rest of their lives praying for the conversion of sinners. Jesus has told us in personal apparitions that the punishments of Hell are said to be of the type of the faults the damned possessed on earth. Each sin will have its own particular torment. For example:

The lazy will be forced to work continuously. The gluttonous will be tormented with extreme hunger and thirst. The proud will be filled with confusion, and the greedy will feel the pinch of miserable want. And yet, the worst pain of hell is none of these. The people in hell would gladly bear all of this and much more if only they could hope for My [God's] friendship and love, no matter how long it might take, be it even a billion years from now. Their keenest torment is that they have forever lost me [Jesus], the Source of all true joy and perfect happiness. This suffering makes hell the home of despair and undying hatred" (*My Daily Bread*, The Way of Purification, Conversion, Chapter 20, "The Pains of Hell").

Speaking of the damned, St. John says, "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). St. Matthew has Jesus saying of the damned, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matthew 8:12). Quoting Jesus on the lot of the damned, St. Luke writes, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity! There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

Bodily Resurrection

Originally God created the body and soul to be together for eternity. Adam and Eve possessed not only immortal souls but glorified immortal bodies as well. Tragically, when they sinned against God they became subject to death, the eventual separation of their bodies from their souls. We inherit this fallen condition from them. While our souls remain immortal after death, our bodies are subject to corruption and disintegration: "Remember man, that you are dust and unto dust you shall return" (Genesis. 3:19), words spoken to our first parents after the fall. We will not be complete until God reunites our souls with our bodies when he comes again in glory at the end of time before the Last Judgment. Then souls and the bodies of the just will be glorified. The resurrected body will be the same body that a person had on earth, but the bodies of the just will be glorified and no longer subject to the limitations of time and space. The glorified body will pos-

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sess the properties of the following:

- **Impassability**, which means freedom from suffering, sorrow, or death;
- **Subtlety**, which means freedom from restraint by matter or that the spiritual nature shines through and is not hidden in the body;
- **Agility**, which means that the soul will command the body to move with great ease and speed;
- **Clarity**, which means that the body will be free of any deformities and filled with beauty.

Moreover, the risen body will be free of any defect of human nature, such as concupiscence; it will possess perfect integrity and unity.

On the other hand, after the resurrection, the bodies of the damned will now suffer physical as well as mental and emotional torture.

St. Paul taught that there is a close relationship between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of those who live and die in him, for "If we have died with him [Jesus], we shall also live with him" (2 Timothy 2:11). The *Catechism* says "In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection (No. 997).

In a very real sense, we have already risen with Christ at baptism, for the sacrament instills in us a new life in him. The *Catechism* says of this fact:

Christ will raise us up on the last day; but it is also true that, in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ. For, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is already now on earth a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ: And you were buried with him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. . . . If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (No. 1002). [Furthermore], United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains hidden with Christ in God. The Father has already raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we also will appear with him in glory (No. 1003).

Fr. John Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* of the bodily resurrection:

The universal return to life of all human beings, to occur soon before the last judgment by God's almighty power. Each individual soul will be reunited with the selfsame body with which it was united on earth. While all the dead will rise, only the just will have their bodies glorified.

Last Judgment

The particular judgment will be repeated at the end of time at the Day of Judgment—the General Judgment—when all men will know us for what we are. The *Catechism* tells us that “When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace” (No. 682). The General Judgment is for the glory of God and to demonstrate to all that no injustice will go unpaid. In this regard, the *Catechism* states:

The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God’s justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God’s love is stronger than death (No. 1040).

Jesus says in St. John’s gospel of the Last Judgment, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25-29).

The *Catechism* tells us of this event, “The resurrection of all the dead, ‘of both the just and the unjust,’

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will precede the Last Judgment. This will be 'the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear (the Son of man's) voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.' Then Christ will come 'in his glory, and all the angels with him. . . . Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. . . . And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (No. 1038).

Moreover, the *Catechism* says elsewhere, "On Judgment Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history" (No. 681). He will make a final judgment of the living and those in Heaven and Purgatory at the Last Judgment. Then the souls of the good and the bad will be united with their bodies. This is the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. In regard to this matter, the *Catechism* states, "Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (No. 1001). Of this matter Jesus is recorded as saying in St. Matthew's gospel:

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life' (Matthew 25: 31-46).

To conclude, the *Catechism* says of the Last Judgment, "Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light. Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned. Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. On the last day Jesus will

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say: “Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (No. 678).

The end of Salvation History: Salvation History, the story of the salvation of mankind, ends with the Resurrection of the body and the Last Judgment. Time ends and eternity begins. The blessed will weep no more and experience eternal joy (Revelation 21:4), while the damned will weep and gnash their teeth forever (Luke 13:28). Of this time St John writes:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-4).

Since we will have undergone a particular judgment at our deaths, why then is the General or Last Judgment necessary? The particular judgment will be repeated at the end of time at the Day of Judgment—the General Judgment—when all men will know us for what we are. The *Catechism* says of the General Judgment, “When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace” (No. 682). The *Catechism* states in another place:

The resurrection of all the dead, 'of both the just and the unjust,' will precede the Last Judgment. This will be 'the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear (the Son of man's) voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.' Then Christ will come 'in his glory, and all the angels with him. . . . Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. . . . And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (No. 1038).

Moreover, the *Catechism* says in another place, “On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history” (No. 681). He will make a final judgement of the living and those in Heaven and Purgatory at the Last Judgement. Then the souls of the good and the bad will be united with their bodies. This is the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. The *Catechism* states, “Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia: For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (No. 1001).

What does the Bible tell us about the Last Judgment? Jesus says in St. John's gospel of the Last

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Judgment, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25-29).

What is the purpose of the General Judgment? Regarding this matter, the *Catechism* states:

The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. The Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death (No. 1040).

In other words, the General Judgment is for the glory of God and to demonstrate his justice—to make it known to all that no injustice will go unpaid.

To conclude, the *Catechism* says of the Last Judgment, "Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light. Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned. Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. On the last day Jesus will say: 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' " (*Catechism*, No. 678).

Amen

As with many prayers, the Nicene Creed ends with Amen. As does the last book of the Bible, the Creed ends with the Hebrew word “Amen.” Furthermore, the word is frequently used to conclude prayers in the New Testament. Moreover, the Church also ends her prayers with “Amen.” The *Catechism* tells us: “the Hebrew, amen comes from the same root as the word “believe.” This root expresses solidity, trustworthiness, faithfulness. And so we can understand why ‘Amen’ may express both God's faithfulness towards us and our trust in him” (No. 1062). The *Catechism* tells us further, “the Creed's final ‘Amen’ repeats and confirms its first words: ‘I believe.’ To believe is to say “Amen” to God's words, promises and commandments; to entrust oneself completely to him who is the ‘Amen’ of infinite love and perfect faithfulness. The Christian's everyday life will then be the ‘Amen’ to the ‘I believe’ of our baptismal profession of faith (No. 1064). To close the Creed with “Amen” then means to affirm what one has just professed is believed.

**SECTION II.
THE SACRAMENTS**



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

SECTION II. THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

By Msgr. Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest of times, the Catholic Church has recognized seven sacraments, which are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Holy Matrimony. Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist are called the sacraments of Christian initiation, because once they are given they render a permanent seal or character upon one's soul. Baptism, the beginning of new supernatural life, is the first of three sacraments of Christian initiation. Confirmation is the second sacrament of initiation, which strengthens the supernatural life of the Christian. The third sacrament of initiation is the Eucharist, which “nourishes the Christian with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.” Penance and Anointing are the two sacraments of the sick; one for the spiritually sick or dead, the other for the physically sick. Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony are sacraments of service. In regard to this matter, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:



The sacraments of Christian initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—lay the foundations of every Christian life. The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity" (No. 1212).

The Catholic sacraments are the means that Christ provided for his followers in order to share in his own divine life, to grow in his life during their stay in this world, and, if necessary, to regain the divine life if it has been lost through sin. They are the principal means of spiritual nourishment; they are the main way we receive God's grace through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They are effective signs of God's grace and the Church administers them as the principal means with which we receive his sanctifying grace and actual graces. Jesus instituted the sacraments, especially the Eucharist or Mass, to help us to be holy like him. A sacrament has been defined as, “an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.” A definition that older readers are familiar with is the one found in the *Baltimore Catechism*, which goes: “A sacrament is an outer manifestation of an inner infusion of grace.” However, as we shall see below, God has provided other means of baptism for those unable to hear the Gospel preached.

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Each sacrament involves the use of a visible external rite, which consists of matter and form. The matter or material cause is the material (the remote matter) used in the sacrament and the action performed (the proximate matter), such as the pouring of water in Baptism. The form or formal cause is the actualizing principle of the sacrament; it is what makes something happen. In the case of Baptism the actualizing principle is the words spoken by the minister, such as “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The remote matter of the anointing of the sick is the oil of olives blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter is the application of the oil. The remote matter of Confirmation is holy chrism, which is a mixture of olive oil and balm blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter consists in the imposition of hands and anointing with chrism. Penance differs somewhat from the other Sacraments in that while the matter of the other Sacraments is a thing of some kind, water, chrism, etc., the matter of the Sacrament of Penance is the acts of the penitent, such as contrition, confession and satisfaction. The Council of Trent declared that “sins which are destroyed by Penance may properly be called the matter of Penance.” The form, the actualizing principle of the sacrament is the words, “I absolve thee from your sins. . . .” “The efficient cause of the Sacrament is Jesus Christ who speaks through his priest acting in his person (*in persona Christi*). The final cause of the Sacrament is to restore the penitent once again to God's friendship and to provide the graces necessary to maintaining that friendship.

Each sacramental rite confers a special spiritual effect and sacramental grace appropriate for each sacrament and occurs at key times during a person's life. The *Catechism* states in this regard: “The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life” (No. 1210).

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation. The Nicene Creed that Catholics profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass states: “We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” John the Baptist told the crowds that the one who was coming after him would baptize not with water alone, but with water and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:15-16). The Bible says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark. 16:16). Jesus said to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of

God” (John 3:3-5). He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them (Matthew 28:19). The *Catechism* tells us that the Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. It states that “In accordance with the Lord’s will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism” (No.1277). It states elsewhere that “The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit’” (No. 1257). Numerous other places in the Bible make reference to the need for Baptism (For examples see: Titus 3:5; Acts 2:37-38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; Gal. 3:27; Hebrews 10:22).

The Baptism of Jesus: If baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins, why did Jesus insist on being baptized by his cousin, John? John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. (Matthew 3:14-15). It has been considerable discussion over the ages what Jesus meant by “to fulfill all righteousness.” In Matthew’s Gospel it appears to mean the fulfillment of prophecy and to moral conduct in conformity with God’s will. Elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel it appears to mean God’s activity (Matthew 5:6; 6:33). One source states that “To fulfill all righteousness is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race. This involves Jesus’ identification with sinners; hence the propriety of his accepting John’s baptism.”



St. Justin Martyr, the great second century apologist, maintained that the Son had no need to be baptized—just as he had no need to be born, to suffer, or die—but did so in order to reveal himself to mankind. St. Irenaeus, another great second century defender of the Faith, points out the connection between the baptism and anointing; e.g. how in the Acts of the Apostles Jesus was “anointed with the Holy Spirit and power.” Just as Joshua had entered the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan, Jesus opened the way to heaven by entering and dividing the same waters. Other saints emphasized how through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. One source states of this matter: “The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and ‘walk in newness of life’” He says, “Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him.” The *Catechism* states regarding Jesus’ baptism:

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. Already he is anticipating the ‘baptism’ of his bloody death. Already he is coming to ‘fulfill all righteousness’, that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. The Father’s voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to ‘rest on him’. Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism “the heavens were opened” - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation (No. 536). Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and ‘walk in newness of life’: Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him. Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God. (No. 537).

Since Jesus became one us in all things but sin, he is the first to go into the waters of baptism among many who are to follow.

Baptism by Desire or Blood: The Church teaches that for those, through who no fault of their own, who do not undergo baptism of water can achieve God's sanctifying grace and membership into his family by a Baptism of desire or of blood. The baptism of desire applies both to “those who, while wishing to be baptized, die before receiving the sacrament” and “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it

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through the dictates of conscience” (Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council). The *Catechism* states that “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (No. 1259). Furthermore, “Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized” (No. 1281).

Regarding the Baptism of blood, the *Catechism* says, “The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament” (No. 1258). The Baptism of blood refers “to the martyrdom of those believers who were killed for the faith before they had a chance to be baptized. This was a common occurrence in the early centuries of the Church, but also in later times in missionary lands. The baptism of blood has the same effects as the baptism of water.”

Salvation History

To fully understand our need for Baptism, we must have knowledge of Salvation History. We will provide only a brief outline of the subject here. To begin, let’s examine what is meant by Salvation History. Salvation History is the story of the creation, fall, and redemption of humankind. Central to this story is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose story includes his conception, birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. Salvation history is found in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and the history of the Catholic Church. It is found especially in the Holy Bible and Tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Salvation history ties everything together for us; it relates the Old Testament with the New Testament.

The Old Testament (Covenant)—The Creation: Our story begins in the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament, which describes how God the Holy Trinity created the universe and all that is in it in six days and rested on the seventh. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is important to remember that the Holy Trinity is only one God consisting of three divine Persons, because they all share the same substance or being, which makes them co-equal in power, glory, majesty, and wisdom and all of them have existed from all eternity.

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After having created the heavens and the earth, Genesis tells us that on the sixth day God created the first humans in his image and likeness. He created our first parents, Adam and Eve, out of his abundance, out of his goodness, wisdom, and love and a desire to demonstrate and communicate his glory, not out of any deficiency. God placed them in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it. They and their descendants were to be God's adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. It is important to note that the Second Person of the Trinitarian Family is the Father's Son by nature; however, because they were created beings, Adam and Eve were his son and daughter by adoption and by grace. God's intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever as his extended family. They and all of their children were to be the Father's heirs.

Humans created in God's image and likeness: What does it mean to say that God created Adam and Eve in his image and likeness? The "image of God" is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. Humans possess an immortal spirit or soul united to a body. The bodies of Adam and Eve possessed the preternatural gift of bodily immortality before their fall from God's grace; afterwards their souls were to be separated from their bodies at death.

In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was the life of God within them; the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. Justice is giving someone his due; Adam and Eve before the fall gave God worship, praise and thanksgiving which was his due.

Although life in the Garden of Eden was heaven on earth and Adam and Eve possessed sanctifying grace, experienced perfect natural happiness, and lived in close friendship with God, they did not yet possess the Beatific Vision, the vision of God himself. That was something they could enjoy only after passing a test of their love and devotion to him. He wanted his adopted children to love him by a free choice of their wills. If they had not possessed this ability, they would not have possessed God's likeness whose will is absolutely free.

The Fall and Original Sin: Tragically, our first parents lost Original Holiness and Original Justice for themselves and their children by freely choosing to commit the first sin—the Original Sin. To test them, God told them they could have everything for their enjoyment in their earthly paradise except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by Lucifer in the disguise of a serpent, first Eve then Adam in their pride ate the forbidden fruit. The serpent had tempted them by telling them that they would not die if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, but instead would be gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). The *Catechism* says of this tragic event, "The entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the

sin of our first parents” (No. 379). Pride is the worst sin of all, because one guilty of pride is trying to be God. The prideful person always puts his will before God’s will; not thy will be done, but my will be done.

The consequences of the Fall: As a consequence of their fall from God’s grace, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy, because God no longer dwelled in their souls. As a result of their loss of holiness, they lost God’s friendship (justice) too. As a consequence, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness. No longer in God’s grace, they were driven out of the Garden of Eden into a world of suffering and sorrow, death and destruction. The entire human race inherited their fallen condition, because that is all our first parents had to pass on to us. In the fallen state, all of mankind inherited a diminished intellect and a weakened will as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is suffering, sorrow, and death. However, after the Fall God still loved them, so much so that he was his plan to send his only begotten son into the world to redeem them and their posterity and to restore them to his family.

God’s covenants with a Chosen People: After the Fall, God began to gradually reveal himself to humankind. To begin the process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family, he made covenants or agreements with a chosen people, the Israelites. The story of the old covenant is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the old covenant God promised to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments. God’s revealed his commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. The covenant was sealed by sacrificing animals. In the Old Testament God was preparing the world for the redemption of the world when he was to send his only begotten Son to save us.

The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn’t repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this repeating cycle and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

New Testament (Covenant): The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the New Testament, the New and Everlasting Covenant. The New Testament is the story of the redemption of mankind. It describes the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that humans could keep their end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a new and everlasting covenant on their behalf. The New and Everlasting

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Covenant, sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made present at each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere in the Gospel. If we obey his commandments, our eternal reward is Heaven.

The Incarnation: The Holy Trinity, next to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation is the most important doctrine of the Catholic Faith. The Incarnation occurred when the Word became Flesh and dwelled among us. The prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled hundreds of years afterwards when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would save the world (Matthew 1:20-25, Luke 1:26-37). At her consent, the Word (the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) was made Flesh and dwelled among us (Luke 1:26-38); in other words, the Word became incarnate (from the Latin *incarnare*, which means to make flesh).

St. John begins his Gospel with the words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:1-2; 14). John is here talking about the Incarnation, which means to embody or be made of flesh. At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. He is true God and true man. It is very important to stress here that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine intellect and will with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy Trinity had separate intellects and wills, there would exist three separate gods, not one. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10) or “I came from the father” (John 15:28) or “[He] who sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).

The Incarnation was the most important event that ever occurred in history, because every event before was affected by it and every event that followed until the end of time was or will be affected by it. In fact, we even ascertain our time from the birth of Jesus Christ: before Christ, B.C., and Anno Domini, A.D. (in the Year of our Lord). The Incarnation was so important, because it raised the dignity and worth of every single human being. Being created in God's very image had already given humans inestimable dignity and worth; the Incarnation even raised this dignity and worth even further yet, because God himself had become a human, making it possible for all humans to elevate their status to the supernatural level, of course, by adoption and by grace, not by nature. Because God created us in his image and likeness, it gives us the motive for loving and caring for others. In fact, Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loves us (John 15:12), which is a tall order. It is much greater order than loving our neighbor as ourselves, because our capacity to love others depends on the degree to which we love ourselves. An added reason for loving others

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is the Redemption of humankind, because God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son into the world to redeem it (John 3:16). Moreover, the Incarnation increases our worth and dignity even further yet by restoring us to God's family.

Why did Jesus Christ become man? Jesus became a man for the following reasons: to restore us to God's Family; to elevate our human nature so we can share in his divinity; to redeem us by suffering and dying on the Cross; to suffer and die for our sins; to show how much he loves us; to give us hope; to set for us an example of perfect holiness and virtue; to help us reach perfection; and to give us an example and motive for loving others.

Nonetheless, the Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's likeness. We are made friends with him once again only at Baptism, whether of water, blood, or desire. The restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin. Baptism makes us right with God as our Protestant brothers and sisters would say. Before Baptism we were dead to sin. At Baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6). Also, Baptism makes us holy, because God the Trinity, who is holiness itself, comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23).

The role of baptism in our lives

Baptism restores us to God's family; it makes us children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his son Jesus. It is through grace that we participate in the inner life of the Trinity. In Baptism we receive sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us; it is our participation in the life of the Trinitarian Family; it is the Holy Trinity dwelling in our souls. The *Catechism* says that grace "is our participation in [God's] life. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an 'adopted son he can henceforth call God 'Father,' in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church" (No.1997).

Another way of conceiving of grace is our participation in God's life. Grace is like a beam of light from God that penetrates our souls. It has been said that Jesus Christ himself is the sacrament, "because he gave his life to save mankind. His humanity is the outward sign or the instrument of his Divinity. It is through his humanity that the life of the Father and the Holy Spirit come to us as grace through the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ alone who mediates the sacraments to allow grace to flow to mankind."

Jesus instituted his Church and gave us his Apostles and their successors to shepherd his flock after his Ascension into Heaven. The Church—Christ's Mystical Body—itself is a sacrament through which God's graces and mercy flow. The Apostles and their successors, the bishops and clergy down through the ages, minister the seven sacraments, including Baptism, to help us lead good lives in this world, and to help us reach Heaven in the next.

St Paul tells us that before baptism we were dead to sin. At baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ; we were born again. In this regard he states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

The role of Sanctifying Grace in our lives: When one is baptized, he or she receives Sanctifying Grace. To sanctify means to make holy. Only God is Holy, so we become holy only to the extent that God dwells in our souls. Sanctifying grace is that which makes us holy. God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Sanctifying grace is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life. We become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23). Our baptism gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus Christ. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity.

Our friendship with God began at our baptism. It is then that we experienced the infusion of Sanctifying Grace and began to live at the supernatural level. At baptism we experience several effects, which are explained below.

- **Removal of Original Sin:** Baptism removes the stain of Original Sin inherited from our first parents.
- **Temples of the Holy Spirit:** By washing away the stain of Original Sin, baptism prepares our souls for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity. In this regard, Jesus said, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23). St. Paul speaks of the indwelling Trinity several places. For example: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). In another place he says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19). And in another, "Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (2 Timothy. 1:14).

- **Supernatural life:** Sanctifying grace elevates the human soul from the natural to the supernatural level, even above the angelic level, because the sanctified soul participates in God's very nature.
- **Just and pleasing to God:** Sanctifying grace restores holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, being made holy. Sanctifying grace also justifies us; it makes us friends with God and restores the harmony between us and God lost by our first parents. Justification is the process of being justified, which establishes harmony between us, God, our neighbor, and the creation around us.
- **Members of Christ's Mystical Body:** We become members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church at baptism. The Church is God's family.
- **Adopted children of God the Father:** We became adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus at baptism. Regarding this St. Paul said, "You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, 'Abba!' (that is, Father). The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans. 8:15-16).
- **Brothers and sisters to Jesus:** Since we become adopted children of God the Father at Baptism, we also become brothers and sisters to his son Jesus.
- **Coheirs with Christ:** Since sanctifying grace makes us participators in the divine life that Christ completely possesses, it follows that we are his brothers and sisters, for as St. Paul tells us God has predestined us "to share the image of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers" (Romans 8:29). God loves us the way he loves his son and looks at Jesus as our brother and grants us the same heritage as he possesses.
- **Heirs of Heaven:** As God's children we became heirs to Heaven, for in this regard St. Paul says, "But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ" (Romans. 8:17). Moreover, on adopting us as his children, God infuses sanctifying grace into our souls, giving us a participation in the divine nature itself.
- **Capacity for supernatural merit:** We must be in state of sanctifying grace in order for our good works to earn merit toward eternal life. Supernatural merit requires the possession of the supernatural life. While in the state of mortal sin, our good works earn us nothing with respect to eternal life; however, by good works we can earn actual graces that motivate us to return to God's family.
- **Intimate union with God:** Although we are united to God before our baptism in a natural manner by virtue of his essence, presence, and power, sanctifying grace increases

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this union to an infinitely higher level of union, which is participation in the divine life itself. Sanctifying grace creates a loving relationship between God and us and makes us his friends and adopted children, for, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

In summary, sanctifying grace transforms the soul, making it capable of joining the infinite knowledge and love of God. This ability begins in this life at our baptisms. Baptism cleansed us of the stain of Original Sin and made us temples of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity came to dwell in our souls. This made us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his Son Jesus as well as heirs to Heaven. We are members of God's family, his Church. However, we can achieve full union with God only in the next life, and then only after our souls have undergone whatever cleansing that might be necessary in Purgatory. But since the vision of God is infinite, and we are finite, we have unlimited capacity to increase sanctifying grace in our souls. We can do this by a lifetime of study and meditation on the Faith, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the development of the virtues, the performance of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, continual prayer and penance, and loving God with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

Achieving Heaven fulfills our longing for God. To quote the great St. Augustine in this regard, "O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions* 1,1). We often look forward to getting or achieving more things, foolishly thinking that they will satisfy us, but we soon tire of them or find them less satisfying than when we get or achieve them. Anticipation is always greater than realization. Nothing less than God himself can really satisfy us. Only those who go to Heaven will rest in peace. Those who fail to achieve Heaven and go to Hell never find rest.

Growing in holiness after baptism

The holiness we receive at baptism is just a start to our growth in holiness. Let's use an analogy to illustrate our point. Let's imagine that our souls are like containers that when full will hold only so much grace. This means at baptism the container holds all of the grace that one is capable of holding at that moment. However, since God is infinite there is still room for indefinite increases of his grace. This means that the size of the container can grow as we grow in holiness, as we acquire more of God's life in us. Assuming that we are in the state of sanctifying grace at our deaths, the size of the container, that is the amount of grace that we possess at that time, will determine the amount of happiness that we will forever experience in Heaven.

What does a growth of grace involve? Of course, God does not grow in us; he is infinite; he has no potential for growth. In Scholastic terms he is pure act, he simply is, with no potency, no potential for growth. If God could grow, he wouldn't be perfect. So what does it mean to say that we grow in God's grace?

Our way of conceptualizing a growth in grace is that growing in grace means a fuller participation

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in God's life, the life of the Holy Trinity. When the Trinity dwells in our souls we are said to be in a state of sanctifying grace; God's life is within us and we can participate in his life. In fact, we can't grow in grace without possessing sanctifying grace; we can't grow in grace if God isn't dwelling in our souls; consequently, our good deeds have no merit without grace.

At Baptism God infuses into our souls the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the Cardinal or moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit of Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The infusion of these virtues and gifts first happens at Baptism.

Practically speaking, the growth in holiness means that as one becomes more holy after baptism, he or she acquires more Faith, Hope, and Charity, more Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, more Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom, etc. However, during the early times of our lives these virtues lie dormant and the capacity for growth increases as we grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and above all spiritually. In other words, the size of our containers is expanding as well. This gives us the capacity for more grace, more of the virtues and gifts. The more of these virtues and gifts we possess, the more intimate our relationship with God will be.

Sanctifying grace makes humans greater than the angels: Angels were created naturally superior to man. They have greater intellects and stronger wills than we. The good angels that remained faithful to God when Lucifer rebelled were rewarded by being made sons of God and experiencing the joys of Heaven. However, humans who are sanctified and justified are elevated from the natural to the supernatural level of existence. In this sense they are equal to, even greater than the angels. Why is this so?

The key is the Incarnation. When the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became a man, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. When we are baptized we receive the full benefit of Jesus' redemption. When we have the stain of Original Sin washed from our souls by the waters of Baptism, we become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. God living in our souls is what we call grace. It is our participation in God's life. Our baptism makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus, who is both human and divine; he is the Godman. This makes us heirs to Heaven.

Although the angels are created like us in God's image and likeness, and they too are part of his family, they cannot enter into as close a relationship with God as we can. We can become more like God by acquiring more of his life in us, more of his grace by living holy and virtuous lives. When humans become holy enough they achieve union with God, then God assumes their body and soul until they become one with him. Yet unlike eastern mystical religions when the individual finds the center of his being where the god within him lives (i.e., his being is annihilated and he becomes one in being with the universe), the divinized Christian maintains his personality and individuality. In other words, the personality of the divinized Christian is enhanced and affirmed, whereas the divinized Hindu or Buddhist is believed to no longer exist as a separate being; his personality simply ceases to exist as he becomes absorbed into the divinity.

Divinization of Humans: The Church Fathers speak of the divinization of human beings. For example, St. Irenaeus said that Jesus “became what we are, so that he might bring us to be what he himself is.” This statement gives rise to the statement that Jesus shared in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. In this same manner, St. Athanasius said that the Word, “became man so that we might be made God.” St. Basil the Great describes the effect of the gift of the Spirit by saying that the Christian is “made God.” And St. Augustine said that Christians are deified by grace. Although what the Fathers said about the divinization of man is true, they were not using the word “God” in precisely the same way one uses it when saying the Holy Trinity is God, which is probably why they said “man is made God”, and not that “he is God.”

God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, became like us in all things but sin. In this sense God is like us for by his Incarnation he possesses a human body and soul. The angels do not enjoy this benefit; this resemblance to God. If man is even greater than the angels, we believe that it is this fact that would make him so. The best example of perfect virtue and holiness is this sinless God-man, Jesus Christ. To the extent we become like him we become godlike, we become divinized. Of course most of us, hopefully, will achieve this status only in Heaven where our souls will be united with glorified bodies much like that of our Risen Savior and the Blessed Mother. Then we will be truly “gods.” But keep in mind that we shall become “gods” only because we will be filled with God's grace, his life within us, not because of any merits of our own, not because we will have been transformed into a divine substance. We will always remain creatures, created substances or beings, but creatures whose nature have been elevated to the supernatural level by the divine indwelling.

Quoting St. Augustine the *Catechism* says of the divinization of man that “the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth, because ‘heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away.’ He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy” (No. 1994).

You might still wonder, What does it mean that humans can become god, that they can be divinized? The closer one achieves union with God, the more godlike he becomes. One must be purified before he can achieve union with God. Our union with God began at our baptism. At that time we became members of his Mystical Body—the Catholic Church—and to share in the life of the Holy Trinity. At that time, we became adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus, and as a result members of his family. However, because of the consequences of Original Sin, baptism does not restore us completely to the Original Holiness and Justice possessed by Adam and Eve. This is true because our diminished intellect, weakened wills, and our urge to sin called concupiscence. Just as we must be purified in Purgatory before we can experience union or intimate friendship with God in Heaven, we must be purified before we can achieve a closer union with him in this life as well. To experience union with God, one must become holy—to become more like Jesus, our example of perfect holiness and virtue. We can do these things only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world. God gives only in proportion to our ability to

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receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace.

The holier one becomes the more he becomes like God. This does not mean that he is literally becoming God, but that although he remains a creature, he is becoming more and more integrated into the life of the Trinitarian Family. Another way of putting this is that the holier one becomes, he possesses more and more of God's grace, his sanctifying grace, the grace that makes him holy, the grace that makes him more like God. Grace then is the life of God within us, it is our participation in his life. The more grace that one possesses, the more godlike he becomes. Since God is infinite, there is no limit to the amount of grace that one can possess. The Blessed Mother is full of grace, as holy as a human being can become. All other saints only approximate her holiness, because they started their journey toward union with God and Heaven from a state of Original Sin, which Mary did not possess, because she was immaculately conceived. The amount of grace that one possesses at death will determine his or her capacity for happiness in Heaven. Humans are most godlike when he achieves union with God either in this life or in the next. The more one achieves union with God, the more he shares his divinity with us in the form of grace.

Achieving union with God in this life and for eternity requires that we strive to be perfect as is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). Jesus is our model of perfect holiness and virtue. He is perfect by his nature. Mary was perfect because she was full of God's grace. Countless other saints throughout the ages achieved union with God by following Jesus' example. We too can become closer to perfection by overcoming mortal sin, venial sin, and imperfections with the help of God's grace. Achieving holiness and union with God is sainthood.

Achieving holiness and union with God: God made us to know, love, and serve him in this life so we can be happy with him in Heaven in the next life. We must first know him to love and serve him. The more we know him the more we can do these things. We cannot know God directly because of our fallen natures, which makes it harder to know him. We must spend a lifetime getting to know him better. We get to know him better by utilizing the means provided by Jesus with which to achieve union with God. We get to know God better by:

- Studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings); to acquire knowledge of his teachings
- Receiving the sacraments frequently; the principal means of his grace
- Living virtuous lives; the way to holiness
- Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the way to show our love for him
- Prayer; the way to communicate with him
- Penance; the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others

Above all, we get to know God better by loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strengths for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves (John 15:12).

The loss and regain of Sanctifying Grace

We lose sanctifying grace by committing a mortal sin, which is the spiritual death of our soul. When one commits a mortal sin, the indwelling Trinity leaves his or her soul. When this happens, the person is spiritually dead. In order for a sin to be mortal it must be a serious matter, one must know that it is a serious matter, and one must act with a free will.

The meaning of sin: According to the *Catechism* “sin "is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God” (1849, 1853). In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. “Mortal sin,” the *Catechism* teaches, “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (1855). Sin offends God, because it hurts others and is a rejection of his love and mercy.

Mortal means death and mortal sin means spiritual death of the soul. It destroys the life of grace within one’s soul. When one deliberately disobeys God's commandments—does an act contrary to his will—with full knowledge that it is a serious matter and with full consent of the will and not due to any fear or coercion, he or she commits mortal sin; God leaves his or her soul and he or she dies a spiritual death. The person who has violated his or her friendship with God is no longer God's friend. He or she is no longer in good standing in God's family. One who loses his or her place in God’s family loses his or her inheritance of Heaven. He or she is on the road that leads to eternal death and separation from God forever. God simply will not live where he is not wanted and we can't live with him if we do not want to. Like the dead body, which cannot bring itself back to life, the spiritually dead soul in mortal sin can do nothing to rejuvenate itself; only God can give it life once again.

Regaining God's grace and friendship: Because of God's infinite love and mercy, we can readily regain sanctifying grace once it has been lost through mortal sin; he has made it easy to regain his friendship and our place in his family. We can again become his adopted children in good standing by being sorry for our sins, confessing them, having a firm purpose of amendment, and doing penance to pay for the damage caused by them. Like the father of the prodigal son, God is always waiting with open arms to receive his prodigal sons and daughters back into his family (Luke 15:11-32). God dwells in us as long as we remain in his sanctifying grace. We must be in his grace at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can achieve and maintain this holiness only by living lives of faith, hope, and above all love of God and neighbor.

In summary, the fruit of baptismal grace washes away the stain of Original Sin and all personal sins. God infuses sanctifying grace into baptized persons and they become temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwell the Father and the Son. Baptism makes persons sons and daughters of God the Father, brothers and sisters to His Son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven.

Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual regeneration by which a person is incorporated in Christ and

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made a member of his Mystical Body (the Catholic Church), given grace, and cleansed of original sin. Actual sins and the punishment owed for them are remitted also if the person baptized was guilty of such sins (e.g., in the case of a person baptized after reaching the age of reason). The theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity are given with grace as well as the Cardinal Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The matter is the water and the pouring of water. The form is the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Miscellaneous matters associated with Baptism

Who can perform the sacrament of Baptism: Although anyone can administer the sacrament in an emergency, the priest is the ordinary minister. In case of an emergency, anyone, including a non-Catholic, can validly baptize. For a baptism to be valid the minister must have the intention of the Church and say while pouring water over the head or while immersing the candidate, “(Name) I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Pouring or immersion is done each time a Person of the Holy Trinity is invoked. Baptism cannot be repeated, because the sacrament imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign or character. A person must be validly baptized before he or she can receive any of the other sacraments.

Godparents: A sponsor is required for the person being baptized. Catholics 16 years of age and over who have received the sacraments of confirmation and the Eucharist and are practicing their faith are eligible to be sponsors or godparents. Only one is required. Two, one of each sex, are permitted. A non-Catholic Christian cannot be a godparent for a Catholic child, but may serve as a witness to the baptism. A Catholic may not be a godparent for a child baptized in a non-Catholic religion, but may be a witness.

The role of the parents is primary, whereas the role of godparents is secondary. Godparents serve as representatives of the community of faith and with the parents request baptism for the child and perform other ritual functions. Their function after baptism is to serve as proxies for the parents if the parents should be unable or fail to provide for the religious training of the child. According to the *Code of Canon Law* a godparent (referred to in as a “sponsor”) “helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it” (Canon 872A). In accordance with Canon 874, a person who serves as a godparent for a Catholic baptism must:

- Be a Catholic
- Meet the age requirement recognized in the diocese where the baptism takes place
- Have been confirmed and have received the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist
- Lead a life of faith in keeping with the role to be undertaken
- Be eligible to receive the sacraments and not be bound by any ecclesiastical penalty
- Not be the mother or father of the child to be baptized

If a person is not Catholic, but is a baptized Christian who belongs to a non-Catholic denom-

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ination, he or she may participate, together with a sponsor (godparent), as a witness of the baptism (Canon. 874.2). Likewise, a Catholic may participate as a witness of a non-Catholic baptism, but not as a godparent.

These laws exist, because godparents of a child to be baptized represent a community of faith, the Church. In other words, although the child is being baptized into the Christian faith, he or she is also being baptized into a particular denomination. A godparent implicitly or explicitly assents to the beliefs of the denomination into which the child is being baptized. Even if other denominations might allow Catholics to be godparents, Catholics have to consider what he or she would be promising or assenting to by fulfilling that role. For example, a Catholic cannot promise to help raise a child in another faith, especially “if elements of that faith tradition conflict with the teachings of the Church.” Furthermore, it would be a violation of the parents’ trust to sponsor their non-Catholic child with the hope of using one’s influence to convert that child to Catholicism. Just as a Catholic cannot promise to help raise a child in a non-Catholic faith, a non-Catholic cannot assent to the promise to help raise a child a Catholic. For this reason, the Church forbids Catholics to serve as godparents for a non-Catholic baptism, but they may serve as witnesses. In a similar fashion, non-Catholics may not serve as godparents in a Catholic baptism, but they may serve as witnesses.

However, even if a Catholic qualifies to be a potential godparent, this does not mean that he or she is suited for the role. The prospective godparent should not only understand what the obligation entails, but be willing and able to fulfill the role as the Church requires. For example, is the prospective godparent willing to help provide for a child’s upbringing in the Catholic faith? This is especially pertinent if the parents were to die or be incapacitated in some way; would the godparent be able to properly fulfill these responsibilities in the absence of the parents? Another consideration should be whether a prospective godparent is already a godparent. A person should take great care that he or she is not taking on too much responsibility by taking on another godchild.

To agree to be a godparent entails a serious obligation to the parents and the child. The Church reminds us that being a godparent is more of a calling than an honor. It is a matter that should be taken seriously and if need be, a person who has been asked to be a godparent should discuss the matter with a spiritual director or confessor before making a decision. Even if a person should decline the invitation to be a godparent, that person can still have an active role in the life of the child.

Elements for a valid Baptism: For a baptism to be valid, the Catholic Church requires that the proper matter, form and intention be present. The proper matter is “true and natural water.” The proper form requires the minister to pour, completely immerse in, or sprinkle water upon the candidate, while saying the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” However administered, the water must flow on the head, which is symbolic of the washing of sin from the soul. The minister of baptism must intend to baptize as the Church intends.

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Scripture is explicit regarding the necessity of using water and the Trinitarian Formula for Baptism (Matthew 28:19; John 3:5). The norms for lawful baptism in the Catholic Church are found in The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and the Rite of Baptism for Children (RCIC). These rites allow for two options in the method: immersion or the pouring of water. If a candidate is baptized by immersion, “The celebrant, immersing the candidate’s whole body or head three times, baptizes the candidate in the name of the Trinity.” If a child is baptized by pouring water, “The celebrant, taking baptismal water and pouring it three times on the candidate’s bowed head, baptizes the candidate in the name of the Trinity.” If water is not poured or sprinkled on the head, “the baptism would be valid, but illicit; i.e., it would be an authentic baptism but done in a way that deviates from the form prescribed by the Church.” The Catholic Church considers all baptisms valid in which the necessary matter, form and intention are present, including non-Catholic baptisms.

Water must be used for Baptism. “The use of anything other than true water renders the baptism invalid. The substitution of different names in place of ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit,’ in part or in whole, renders the baptism invalid.” For example, a baptism is invalid if the minister replaces the three persons of the Trinity with other names, such as “the Creator, Redeemer and the Sanctifier.” This formula does not describe whose names are being invoked, but what they do. Jesus himself gave us the correct formula when he said just before ascending into Heaven: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Some Christian denominations sprinkle water rather than immerse or pour. The Catholic Church considers such baptisms to be unlawful or illicit in ordinary circumstances, but that sprinkling does bring about a valid baptism. Regarding intention of the minister: “despite what religious affiliation the minister may adhere to, the baptism is valid as long as the minister intends what the Church intends.” For example, if a child is dying in a hospital, a Hindu nurse who knows that the absent Catholic parents would want the child to be baptized can perform a valid baptism by sprinkling water upon the infant when saying the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Since her intent is to baptize as the parents believe, the baptism is valid.

Who can be baptized: Regarding adult baptism, the Code of Canon Law states that “To be admitted to baptism, an adult must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, must be adequately instructed in the truths of the faith and in the duties of a Christian, and tested in the Christian life over the course of the catechumenate. The person must moreover be urged to have sorrow for personal sins” (Canon 865 §1). It goes on to state that “An adult in danger of death may be baptized if, with some knowledge of the principal truths of the faith, he or she has in some manner manifested the intention to receive baptism and promises to observe the requirements of the Christian religion” (Canon 365 §2). In regard to the reception of Holy Communion after baptism, the Code says “Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, immediately after receiving baptism an adult is to be confirmed, to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist and to receive holy communion” (Canon 866).

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In regard to the baptism of children, Canon 867 §1 declares that “Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks. As soon as possible after the birth, indeed even before it, they are to approach the parish priest to ask for the sacrament for their child, and to be themselves duly prepared for it.” It goes on to say in §2 that, “If the infant is in danger of death, it is to be baptized without any delay. In order that an infant be baptized lawfully, the parents, or at least one of them, must give their consent. Furthermore, there must exist a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the catholic religion. If such hope is truly lacking, the baptism is, in accordance with the provisions of particular law, to be deferred and the parents advised of the reason for this” (Canon 868 §1). Moreover, “An infant of Catholic parents, indeed even of non-Catholic parents, may in danger of death be baptized even if the parents are opposed to it” (Canon 868 §2). In regard to abandoned infants or foundlings, they are to be “baptized unless diligent enquiry establishes that it has already been baptized” (Canon 870). And lastly, “Aborted fetuses, if they are alive, are to be baptized, in so far as this is possible” (Canon 871).

Doubts about the validity of a Baptism: Canon 869 §1 states regarding this matter: “If there is doubt as to whether a person was baptized or whether a baptism was conferred validly, and after serious enquiry this doubt persists, the person is to be baptized conditionally.” As far as the baptism of non-Catholics is concerned, the Code says “Those baptized in a non-Catholic ecclesial community are not to be baptized conditionally unless there is a serious reason for doubting the validity of their baptism, on the ground of the matter or the form of words used in the baptism, or of the intention of the adult being baptized or of that of the baptizing minister” (Canon 869 §2). If any doubts still exist regarding the validity of a baptism, the sacrament is “not to be conferred until the doctrine of the sacrament of baptism is explained to the person to be baptized, if that person is an adult. Moreover, the reasons for doubting the validity of the earlier baptism should be given to the person or, where an infant is concerned, to the parents” (Canon 869 §3)

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Confirmation when he conferred the Holy Spirit on his Apostles on Easter Sunday (John 20:22) and then more publicly on Pentecost (Acts 2). Confirmation is the second Sacrament of Initiation, which strengthens the supernatural life of the Christian. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911 Edition) defines Confirmation as “A sacrament in which the Holy Spirit is given to those already baptized in order to make them strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.” It is a derivative of the Latin confirmation, meaning “to make fast or sure as well as consummation, meaning a perfect-



ing or completing in relation to baptism.” The *Catechism* states, “Baptism, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of Confirmation together constitute the sacraments of Christian initiation,’ whose unity must be safeguarded. It must be explained to the faithful that the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (No. 1831).

To emphasize the above comments, the *Catechism* tells us that, “The virtues of faith, hope, and charity were first infused into our souls at baptism and further augmented at confirmation.” Furthermore, the Cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude were introduced into our souls at Baptism to supplement the natural virtues that we develop by habitually performing them. Moreover, at Confirmation we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, and the others to supplement the infused virtues that we first received at Baptism. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are “permanent dispositions in the soul which give the soul the ability to respond quickly and with ease to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. They are called Gifts because they are given to the soul with grace at Baptism and Confirmation” (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*). Similarly, the *Catechism* says that they are “permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1830). The Sacrament of Confirmation is like a booster shot that reinforces and raises the Virtues and Gifts even to a higher level. As we accumulate more and more of these virtues, or good habits, during our lives, they contribute to our living virtuous and holy lives (No. 1831).

In addition to the Gifts and Virtues, when one is baptized, he or she takes on the role of priest, prophet, and king (Revelations.5: 10). The *Catechism* says of this matter: “The anointing with sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one ‘anointed’ by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king” (No. 1241). Moreover, one is

confirmed by a bishop as priest, prophet, and king. In this regard, the *Catechism* states: “Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them” (No. 783). The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are “consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood” (No. 1546).

The Effects of Confirmation: The effects of the sacrament produce a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as experienced by the apostles and other disciples of Jesus Christ at Pentecost (Acts 2). The result is an increase and deepening of the grace we received at Baptism. In summary, Confirmation has the following effects:

- Brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.
- Roots us more deeply in the divine filiation.
- Strengthens our resolve to carry out our roles of Priest, Prophet, and King.
- Unites us more firmly to Christ.
- Increases the Theological Virtues in us.
- Increases the Cardinal Virtues in us.
- Increases the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in us, which are “permanent dispositions in the soul which give the soul the ability to respond quickly and with ease to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.”
- Renders our bond with the Church, Christ's family, more perfect and associates us more closely with her mission.
- Gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross (*Catechism*, No. 1303).
- It makes us soldiers of Christ to defend us against the evils of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil and to help us defend the Faith from its enemies.

Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for “it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the ‘character,’ which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of His Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be His witness.”

In closing this section, the *Catechism* tells us that “Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that ‘the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time,’ for without Confirmation and Eucharist, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete” (No. 1306). Those to be confirmed should select a sponsor who is confirmed and a practicing Catholic and choose a Confirmation name, which must be the name of a saint (see the addendum below for details).

The Biblical Basis of Confirmation: Confirmation is a sacrament of Christian initiation with a strong biblical basis. Even in the Old Testament we find God pouring out his Spirit upon his chosen people. In Isaiah 44:3 he says “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring.” In Ezekiel 39:28–29 he says in a like manner, “I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more; and I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.” And again in Joel 2:28–29 he states, “And it will come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit.”

Centuries later in the New Testament Jesus Christ speaks several times about the reception of the Holy Spirit by those who would believe in him. In John 7:37–39 he is recorded as saying, “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, ‘If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.”’ Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

On the night he was betrayed Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. . . . These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:16–17, 25–26).

And again on the day he ascended into Heaven, Jesus spoke with the apostles about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.” And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . . But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5, 8).

The promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred on Pentecost, when “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). After having received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles conferred the Holy Spirit upon the baptized through prayer and the laying on of hands. St. Luke tells us that, “Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet



fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14–17).

Furthermore, St. Paul the Apostle also administered the sacrament of Confirmation. We read in the Acts: “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts. 19:6). What is more, the *Catechism* citing Paul's Letter to the Hebrews lists the sacrament among “the elementary doctrines of Christ” and again associates “the laying on of hands” with becoming “partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Hebrews 6:1–4).

Moreover, as the successors of the apostles, the bishops of the Church have continued to administer the sacrament down through the centuries. Many of the Fathers of the Church refer to the Sacrament of Confirmation: Tertullian, St. Hippolytus, Pope St. Cornelius, St. Cyprian, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Pope St. Innocent I, and Pope St. Leo I.

The Age of Confirmation: One scholar of the subject has said that “At different times in the Church’s history and in different liturgical rites, the Sacrament of Confirmation has been administered at different ages.” The *Catechism* tells us that as dioceses began to grow and it became impossible for the bishop to preside personally at all baptisms, two major traditions of administering the Sacrament of Confirmation developed and endure to this day.

In the East, the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion are administered by a priest to infants immediately after they are baptized. This practice lays stress on the unity of the three sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. The *Catechism* says of this practice: “While Confirmation is fittingly called the sacrament of Christian maturity, the Church reminds us that ‘we must not confuse adult faith with the adult age of natural growth, nor forget that the baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need ‘ratification’ to become effective’” (No. 1308).

On the other hand, in the West, the Bishop is the ordinary administer of the Sacrament of Confirmation, a practice that stresses the link between this sacrament and the apostles. In doing so,

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“it manifests the communion between Christians and their bishops and reminds Christians that they, too, must bear witness to Christ as lay apostles.”

Our source tells us that “In the Latin or Western tradition, the practice of confirming infants remained widespread until the thirteenth century and continued in Spain into the 20th Century. In time, however, the age of reason (about seven years old) became (and remains) ‘the reference point for receiving Confirmation;’” Then he cites the Roman Catechism of 1566, otherwise known as the Catechism of the Council of Trent, as counseling that, the sacrament be administered between the ages of seven and twelve. He also cites the 1917 Code of Canon Law that decreed that the age of reason was the proper time to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The current Code of Canon Law states that, “The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops has determined another age, or there is danger of death, or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise.”

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with the approval of the Vatican, decreed in August of 2001 that, “the age for conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Latin Rite dioceses of the United States will be between the age of discretion and about sixteen years of age.” It is left to the discretion of each diocesan bishop to determine the age of reception of the sacrament in his diocese, “since he is ‘the first steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to him’ and ‘the moderator, promoter and guardian of her whole liturgical life.’”

Although the bishop has the authority to regulate the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation in his diocese, he “cannot refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them” (canon 843, §1). This right was affirmed in 1999 when the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments ruled that “the right of the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation can take precedence over the bishop’s authority to regulate the sacrament’s administration.” This case resulted when an 11-year-old girl requested to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and the bishop refused to grant her a dispensation, because he had required that recipients of the Sacrament of Confirmation in his diocese had to be at least sophomores in high school.

There is a tendency in this country to hold off baptism until the child reaches the teen years. Our guess is this is done to hold on to them longer in the youth programs. I don't think that this is a good idea, because most of the youth programs are not very good ones anyway, and young people in their teens need all the grace they can get in order to live in this society with all of its invitations to sin. We believe that Confirmation should take place in middle school, because they need the additional graces that Confirmation would confer on them during their high school years. In this regard, the Congregation stated: “Indeed, the longer the conferral of the sacrament is delayed after the age of reason, the greater will be the number of candidates who are prepared for its reception but are deprived of its grace for a considerable period of time.”

Whatever the age, the *Catechism* states that to qualify for Confirmation, the candidate must have:

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- attained the age of reason;
- profess the faith;
- be in the state of grace;
- have the intention of receiving the sacrament;
- and be prepared to assume the role of disciple and witness to Christ, both within the ecclesial community and in temporal affairs (No.1319).

Since Confirmation completes the process begun at Baptism, Confirmation is given only once, for as the *Catechism* says, “it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the 'character,' which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness” (No. 1304). It goes on to say that, “This 'character' perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, received in Baptism, and 'the confirmed person receives the power to profess faith in Christ publicly and as it were officially (quasi Ex officio)’” (No. 1305).

Sponsors: In regard for the need of a sponsor, the *Catechism* states, “Candidates for Confirmation, as for Baptism, fittingly seek the spiritual help of a sponsor. To emphasize the unity of the two sacraments, it is appropriate that this be one of the baptismal godparents” (No. 1311).

The Minister of Confirmation: In the Latin Rite, the ordinary or original minister of Confirmation is the bishop, although he may grant the faculty of administering Confirmation to priests. This practice is not recommended though, because “it is fitting that he confer it himself, mindful that the celebration of Confirmation has been temporally separated from Baptism for this reason. Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ” (*Catechism* No. 1313). However, in the East, ordinarily the priest who baptizes also immediately confers Confirmation during the same celebration. He shows apostolic unity by using sacred chrism consecrated by the patriarch or the bishop.

The Celebration of Confirmation: The first step in the Confirmation process is the consecration of the sacred chrism. Chrism usually consists of olive oil which is scented with a sweet perfume, usually balsam. Ordinarily, it is consecrated by the bishop in a special Mass on Holy Thursday in the presence of the priests of the diocese. The “oil of catechumens” and the “oil of the sick” are also blessed at this Mass. This action that precedes the celebration of Confirmation, but is in a certain way a part of it. It is the bishop who, in the course of the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, consecrates the sacred chrism for his whole diocese.

Liturgy of Confirmation: When Confirmation is celebrated apart from Baptism, the Liturgy of Confirmation begins with the renewal of baptismal promises and the profession of faith by those to be confirmed. The *Catechism* states that this practice “clearly shows that Confirmation follows Baptism. When adults are baptized, they immediately receive Confirmation and participate in the Eucharist” (No. 1298). Following this, the bishop places his hands over the entire group of

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confirmands. The *Catechism* tells us that this “gesture has signified the gift of the Spirit since the time of the apostles.” With hands extended, the bishop “invokes the outpouring of the Spirit in these words:

All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life. Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord (No. 1299).

The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the minister's hand, while he says, “Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit” (Catechism No. 1300). This anointing “signifies and imprints: a spiritual seal. Anointing, in Biblical and other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning: oil is a sign of abundance and joy; it cleanses (anointing before and after a bath) and limbers (the anointing of athletes and wrestlers); oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds; and it makes radiant with beauty, health, and strength” (*Catechism* No.1293). The *Catechism* states further, “By this anointing the confirmand receives the ‘mark,’ the seal of the Holy Spirit. A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object. Hence soldiers were marked with their leader's seal and slaves with their master’s. A seal authenticates a juridical act or document and occasionally makes it secret (No. 1295). It concludes by saying, “This seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ, our enrollment in his service for ever, as well as the promise of divine protection in the great eschatological trial” (No. 1296). The rite is concluded with the sign of peace, which “signifies and demonstrates ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful” (No. 1301).

THE EUCHARIST: THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS



The Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. He is both the High Priest who offers the victim on the altar of the sacrifice and the victim who is offered. Moreover, the Mass is a covenant, or agreement, between God and man; when we celebrate the Mass, we renew this covenant with God. Since God makes this “New and Everlasting Covenant” with a chosen people—the People of God—we must celebrate the renewal of the covenant as a people. Although God saves one soul at a time, he chooses to save us as members of a community of believers, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Heaven is brought down to earth in the Mass, or better yet, earth is lifted up to Heaven. Furthermore, the Last Supper and Calvary are made present during the celebration. Moreover, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is made present during Mass. The reason people complain that they don’t get anything out of Mass is because they don’t understand these truths. If one does not understand the Mass, it can become a mindless routine; it can become boring. Our purpose here is to learn what the Mass is and how to prepare for its celebration as well as how to conduct ourselves during its celebration so you and others can receive maximum benefit by your participation.

The Meaning of Sacrament

The Catholic sacraments are the means that Christ provided for his followers to share in his own divine life, to grow in his life during their stay in this world, and, if necessary, to regain the divine

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life if it has been lost through sin. They are the principal means of spiritual nourishment; they are the main way we receive God's grace through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They are effective signs of God's grace and the Church administers them as the principal means with which we receive His sanctifying grace and actual graces. Jesus instituted the sacraments, especially the Eucharist or Mass, to help us to be holy like him. In this regard the *Catechism* states, "Adhering to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions, and to the consensus . . . of the Fathers, we profess that "the sacraments of the new law were . . . all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord" (No. 1114).

A sacrament has been defined as follows: "A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace." An older definition found in the *Baltimore Catechism* states: "A sacrament is an outer manifestation of an inner infusion of grace." It is something happening that we can see signifying or pointing to something happening we cannot see— God's grace. For example, while the water is being visibly poured on one's head during baptism when the names of the persons of the Holy Trinity are invoked, the grace that sanctifies is being infused into the soul. Grace is the life of God within us; it is our participation in his life. It has been said that Jesus Christ himself is the sacrament, "because he gave his life to save mankind. His humanity is the outward sign or the instrument of his Divinity. It is through his humanity that the life of the Father and the Holy Spirit come to us as grace through the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ alone who mediates the sacraments to allow grace to flow to mankind."

Jesus instituted his Church and gave us his Apostles and their successors to shepherd his flock after his Ascension into Heaven. The Church—Christ's Mystical Body—itself is a sacrament through which God's graces and mercy flow. The Apostles and their successors, the bishops and clergy down through the ages, minister the seven sacraments to help us lead good lives in this world, and to help us reach Heaven in the next life.

From the earliest of times, the Catholic Church has recognized seven sacraments, which are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist are called the sacraments of Christian initiation, because once they are given they render a permanent seal or character upon one's soul. Penance and Anointing are the two sacraments of the sick; one for the spiritually sick or dead, the other for the physically sick. Each sacrament involves the use of a visible external rite, which consists of matter and form. The matter or material cause is the action performed, such as the pouring of water in Baptism, and the form or formal cause is the words spoken by the minister, such as "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Each sacramental rite confers a special spiritual effect and sacramental grace appropriate for each sacrament and occurs at key times during a person's life.

The Meaning of Sacrifice

A sacrifice involves giving something back to God in order to praise and adore him, to thank him

for blessings received, to express sorrow for sins and ask for forgiveness, and to ask him for favors. In order for a sacrifice to occur, the following conditions must be satisfied: There must be a priest to offer the sacrifice; there must be a victim to sacrifice or destroy; and there must be an altar on which to sacrifice the victim.

The Priesthood

The Priesthood of the Old Testament: The priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigures that of the New Covenant. The *Catechism* says of the Jewish priesthood, “The chosen people was constituted by God as ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance. A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (No. 1539). In another place the *Catechism* states, “Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer, this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish” (No. 1540). And in another, “The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders, a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant” (No. 1541).

Sacrifice was the most important part of the worship of the Israelites. They practiced two types of sacrifice: those that shed the blood of animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, or doves; and unbloody, such as grain or vegetables and fruits. For bloody sacrifices only one's own animals were used. The animal had to be male and could not be unclean, defective, or stolen. The sacrificial ceremony usually consisted of the following steps: (1) the animal was brought to the door of the Tabernacle; (2) the priests placed their hands on the animal to symbolize the transfer of the sins of the offerer to the animal; (3) the animal (victim) was slain; (4) its blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the offerer; (5) the animal's flesh was burned in whole or in part. If only part of the animal was burnt, a sacrificial meal followed in which the offerer showed his friendship with God by eating the victim animal. The procedure of burning the whole animal is called holocaust. The victim animal was not completely burned in sin and guilt offerings; the remaining parts were reserved for the use of the priests. These offerings were made to atone for the offerer's sins. Moreover, only a part of the animal was burned in peace offerings. These were offered to thank God for favors or to ask him for them. Grain and wine were offered as unbloody sacrifices. The grain was in the form of pure flour, ears of grain, unleavened bread, or cakes. They were often joined to the holocausts and peace offerings, but sometimes they were offered separately. The priesthood and sacrifices of the Old Covenant (the Old Testament) prefigures the High priesthood of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the Cross of the New and Everlasting Covenant (the New Testament).

Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New and Everlasting Covenant: Jesus Christ is both

the High Priest and the victim in the New and Everlasting Covenant. He is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice and the victim who is offered. In regard to this truth, the *Catechism* states, “Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the ‘one mediator between God and men.’ The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, ‘priest of God Most High,’ as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique ‘high priest after the order of Melchizedek’; ‘holy, blameless, unstained,’ ‘by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified,’ that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross” (No. 1544).

Furthermore, “The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priest-hood: “Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers” (No. 1545). Moreover, the *Catechism* states:

In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*. ‘It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*)’”(Catechism, No. 1548).

In persona Christi Capitis (in the person of Christ the Head) means that the ordained priest represents Jesus Christ. When the priest says the words of consecration or absolution, it is truly Christ who is speaking.

The ordained priesthood: Although the ordained ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ, they differ in their respective roles. The *Catechism* says of the difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the laity: “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*)” (No. 1592).

The ordained priesthood is ministerial; that is, a role of ordained priests is to minister to the spiritual needs of their congregations. “That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service. It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a ‘sacred power’ which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be

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measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. 'The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him'" (*Catechism*, No. 1551).

In addition, "the ordained priesthood is sacerdotal; that is, another role of ordained priests is to administer the sacraments as a representative of Jesus Christ. The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ—Head of the Church—before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice" (*Catechism*, No. 1552). Only the ordained priest can represent Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in his name in the confessional.

The Priesthood of the Laity: All of us share in Jesus' priesthood in some manner. God had promised Moses as part of his covenant with the Israelites that "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This priesthood has been continued in the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ with the People of God. The Priesthood of the Laity is sometimes referred to as the Priesthood of All Believers. Regarding the laity's priesthood, the *Catechism* states, "Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church 'a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.' The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are 'consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood'" (No. 1546).

The layperson can perform his or her priestly role in many ways. Simply by performing well one's vocation as husband, wife, child, worker, etc., one bears witness to the Christian Faith. Performing some of the many ministries open to the laity, such as catechist, server, reader, commentator, cantor, choir member, and other liturgical functions as well as various other parish ministries is another way of witnessing our faith. Participating in social service and charitable activities is another priestly role.

Above all, let us not forget the sacrifices we offer to God at Holy Mass. As long as we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of God and the benefit of others, as long as we give of ourselves—time, talent, and treasure—for the love of God and neighbor, we are performing a priestly role. When we give our gifts back to God, we destroy them for our own use; we sacrifice them. Our imperfect sacrifices are united to that of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ made present on the altar of Calvary at the consecration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Because our sacrifices are united to his, they become wholly acceptable to God the Father Almighty.

Moreover, the laity shares in Christ's prophetic and kingly roles. By prophet one teaches by example and by counsel or instruction. By king one plays leadership roles in the Church and society.

The Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The Last Supper is the New and Everlasting Covenant sealed by the Blood of the Lamb. It was the first Mass. The *Catechism* states that “By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus’ passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom” (No. 1340).

Vatican Council II confirms that the Eucharist or Mass is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” St Matthew describes the Eucharist as follows: “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25)). Added to the latter are the words “the blood of the new and everlasting covenant,” which makes reference to the covenant that fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant, which is sealed by the Blood of the Lamb—Jesus Christ—to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere, in return for worshipping him as the one true God and keeping his commandments. What Jesus was in effect doing was making present Calvary before the event had happened. All things are possible with God, of course.

When Jesus, the High Priest, said to continue doing this in memory of him, he was instituting the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which priests are ordained into the priesthood. Of this the *Catechism* says, “The Eucharist that Christ institutes at that moment will be the memorial of his sacrifice. Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it. By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant” (No. 611). Elsewhere the *Catechism* tells us that “It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice” (No. 1410).

During the consecration at Mass, the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, “This is my body,” This is the cup of my blood.” At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become the substances of Jesus’ body and blood, even though the accidents appear to be bread and wine. By accidents is meant that the Body and Blood still looks like, smells like, feels like, and tastes like bread and wine, but truly is the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fulfills the promise of Jesus’ “Bread of Life” sermon (John 6). Moreover, the separate consecration

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of the bread and wine—the double consecration—symbolizes the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and participants at Mass are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalen, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels, and the congregation.

As stated above, the Mass is a sacrament and a sacrifice; it is a sacrament because it imparts the grace of God and it is a sacrifice because it makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. A sacrifice is giving something precious back to God in adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, reparation, or petition. For a sacrifice to occur there must be present a priest to offer the sacrifice, a victim in which to offer, and an altar on which to offer the victim. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass Jesus is the High Priest who offers himself as a victim on the altar of Calvary.

The *Catechism* says about the sacrificial aspect of the Mass, “Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: ‘This is my body which is given for you’ and ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.’ In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (No. 1365).

Moreover, the Mass is a covenant, or agreement, between God and man; when we celebrate the Mass, we, the People of God—the members of the Catholic Church—renew this covenant with God. Furthermore, Heaven is brought down to earth in the Mass, or better yet, earth is lifted up to Heaven. Moreover, the Last Supper and Calvary are made present during the celebration.

To summarize, the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the heart and soul of sacramental life for it makes present the most important event in the history of the world. The Mass is a commemoration and re-presentation of Christ's one and only sacrifice on the Cross. The Mass brings Heaven to earth and makes present the Last Supper and Calvary. Furthermore, the doctrine of Transubstantiation teaches that Jesus becomes present at the consecration and that he is really present in the Blessed Sacrament in his full humanity and divinity—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life

The event that follows Jesus' return to Capernaum after he multiplied the loaves and fishes was a watershed in his public ministry. It is so important to his ministry that we shall quote St. John's gospel at length here:

When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, ‘Rabbi, when did you come here?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to

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you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.' Then they said to him, 'What must we do, to be doing the works of God?' Jesus answered them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.' So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Lord, give us this bread always (John 6:25-34).

Jesus answered them saying:

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:35-40).

John continues the dialog:

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven?"' Jesus answered them, 'Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.' [John tells us that the Jews disputed among themselves over Jesus' remarks] (John 41-52).

Now comes the crucial question:

'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down

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from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.’ This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum” (John 6:52-59).

Many, if not most of Jesus' disciples could not accept these “hard” sayings. Was not he speaking of cannibalism? John writes:

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, ‘Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father’ (John 6:60-65).

St John concludes this story by saying:

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Do you also wish to go away?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him (John 6:66-71).

St. John makes it perfectly clear that Jesus meant it literally when he said “my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” Jesus was so firm on this matter that he let almost all of his disciples leave him. Had he meant what he said only figuratively, he would have stopped them by saying so. This event effectively ended Jesus’ public ministry in Galilee. Because of his “hard saying”, he was never able to regain the disciples who left him or to acquire many more new ones to replace them.

The Mass is prefigured in the Old Testament

Covenant theology is an integral part of salvation history and teaches that the New Testament (New Covenant) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Old Covenant). In this regard, St. Augustine said that the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. Jesus himself clearly made this connection as he walked on the road to Emmaus with two of his followers the afternoon of his resurrection (Luke 24:27) and the New Testament makes frequent reference to him fulfilling the scriptures (For example see Matthew 26:56). In fact, Matthew was writing for Jews, so he takes special care to connect the Old Testament with the New, that the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old.

The study of the unity of the Old and New Testaments is called typology. “A type is a real person,

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place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows [or prefigures] something greater in the New Testament” The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* defines a type as “something in the Old Testament that points to something in the New Testament. Many of the persons in the Old Testament are ‘types’ of Christ, e.g., Adam (Rom. 5:14); and things in the Old Testament are types of things in the New Testament. Thus, Noah's Ark is a type of the Church (1 Pet. 3:20 ff.)” That which a type prefigures is called the antitype. The fact that a particular person or thing is a type can be known only by revelation, either from Holy Scripture or from tradition.” Another word for prefiguration or foreshadowing is hint. For example, the Ark of the Covenant of the Old Testament foreshadows (or hints of) the Virgin Mary of the New; the Passover Lamb of the Old Testament prefigures the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” of the New Testament, Jesus Christ; Adam and Eve of the Old Testament are types who hint of the New Adam (Jesus) and the New Eve (Mary) of the New Testament. The Old Testament contains many types that hint of or point to greater things to come in the New Testament. The *Catechism* says in regard to typologies:

The Church, as early as apostolic times, and then constantly in her Tradition, has illuminated the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son” (No. 128). [Therefore], “Christians . . . read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord himself. Besides, the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old” (No. 129). [In conclusion], “Typology indicates the dynamic movement toward the fulfillment of the divine plan when ‘God [will] be everything to everyone’” (No. 130).

Salvation history ties everything together for us; it relates the Old Testament with the New Testament. The Old Testament tells the story of the creation, fall, and God's selection of a Chosen People to prepare mankind for redemption. The New Testament tells the story of the Redemption, which includes the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. You simply cannot know and understand your faith without knowledge of Salvation History.

The *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* states:

Augustine, in common with other fathers of the church, used various traditional (by his day) methods of interpretation, which had become established due to their usefulness in overcoming the difficulties that the diverse and disparate scriptural texts raised, and in teaching and preaching to their congregations. Typology, which identified “types” or prefigurings of NT persons, events, and sacraments in the OT, allowed them to unify the two Testaments with each other and with the current identity and practices of the church.

The exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and their covenant with God are the keys to understanding the Mass. There are several parallels contained in the covenant that Moses and the Chosen People—the Israelites—made with God that prefigures the New and Everlasting Covenant made between the People of God—the Catholic Church—and Jesus Christ, the new Moses. A few

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of them are listed in the table below, of which portions were taken from Understanding the Mass by Reverend Maynard Kolodziej, O.F.M.

Old Covenant or Testament	Old Covenant or Testament
In the old covenant God promises the Chosen People, the Israelites, freedom, land, and prosperity if they worship him as the one true God	In the “New and Everlasting Covenant” God promises the People of God, the Catholic Church, the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper
Moses liberates the Chosen People from the bondage of the Egyptians.	Jesus, the new Moses, liberates the People of God from the bondage of Satan and sin.
The old covenant was ratified with the blood of animals.	The new covenant is ratified with the blood of Jesus.
An unblemished lamb is sacrificed on the altar.	Jesus, the unblemished lamb of God, is sacrificed on the Cross.
The Israelites are provided with manna to eat to sustain them on their journey through the desert.	Christians are provided with the Bread of Life, Holy Communion, to sustain them on their journey through the desert of life.
The Israelites are given the Law of Moses with which to govern their lives.	The People of God are given the Law of Love found in the Sermon on the Mount to govern their lives.
The Israelites are given the Passover meal as a remembrance and a renewal of their covenant with God.	Christians are given the Last Supper, the Eucharist, as a remembrance and a renewal of their covenant with God
The Chosen People celebrated the Passover in memory of God’s love for them.	Christians celebrate the new Passover, the Eucharist, in memory of God’s love for us in Christ.
God gives the Israelites the Promised Land and Jerusalem for fulfilling the covenant	God promises a Heavenly Jerusalem for those who love and serve him.

How Jesus said the first Mass



The Passover or Sedar Meal (or Supper) that Jesus ate with his apostles at the Last Supper in the Upper Room had an established liturgical pattern. Historians tell us that the Passover liturgy in

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Jesus' time, just as it is today, is based on four stages. The four stages of the Passover Meal revolve around four cups of wine that were consumed by the participants. The following discussion follows the account of the Last Supper given in *The Lamb's Supper* by Scott Hahn, a prominent Scripture scholar and theologian at Franciscan University.

The first stage or preliminary course consisted of a blessing called the "kadush", which was a prayer spoken by the celebrant over the first cup of wine. This was followed by passing around a dish of green, bitter herbs along with a fruit sauce that was shared by all the participants. The first cup of wine, the kadush cup, was the blessing of the festival day. This was sort of an appetizer rich with symbolic meaning.

When the preliminary course was complete, a second stage began. This consisted of the Passover liturgy, which was taken from Chapter 12 of the Book of Exodus and read by the celebrant. This tells the story of the first Passover in Egypt. Then the youngest participant asked the oldest participant questions about the Exodus. In this case the youngest apostle, the beloved disciple John, must have asked Jesus the questions, although Jesus probably was not the oldest participant. Afterwards, the participants sang Psalm 113, known as the "little Hallel." Hallel is Hebrew for praise. Then they shared a second cup of wine. It was during this stage of the Passover Meal that the participants relived the Exodus experience and renewed their covenant with God. They believed that the events of the Exodus were made present for their participation, just as Catholics believe the Last Supper and the events at Calvary are made present on the altar during the consecration.

At this stage, the main course began. First, Jesus would have said grace over the unleavened bread. Then roasted lamb, the Passover Lamb, was served along with bitter herbs for the unleavened bread. At this point the celebrant said a prayer. Then Jesus would have said grace over a third cup of wine, which was known as the "cup of blessing." It was probably during the third cup that Jesus transformed the bread and wine into his Body and Blood. The cup of blessing was then passed around and shared by all the participants.

The Passover liturgy was culminated with the fourth cup of wine, known as the "cup of consummation." However, it was not passed around immediately. First, the participants were to sing a beautiful song, which was a long hymn consisting of Psalms 114, 115, 116, 117 and 118. This was known as the "great Hallel." Ordinarily when the long hymn was completed, the fourth cup was passed around and shared. This represented the renewal of the covenant with God; it "signaled the communion between God and his people and among the brothers and sisters who are members of God's family." However, the gospel account says that after the third cup was drunk, Jesus said, "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I am entering into the kingdom of God . . . Then they sang the psalms." But instead of saying grace and blessing and consuming the fourth cup, the gospel says they "went out into the night."

To summarize the account of the Passover Meal that Jesus ate with his apostles: there were four cups that represented the structure of the Passover. The first cup of wine, the kadush cup, was the

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blessing of the festival day. The second cup of wine began at the beginning of the Passover liturgy itself, and involved the singing of psalm 113. The third cup, the cup of blessing, took place at the actual meal of unleavened bread and bitter herbs and roasted Passover lamb. Before the fourth cup was consumed, they sang the great Hallel psalms. Then ordinarily the fourth cup was passed around and consumed by the participants. This was the climax of the Passover Meal. But for some reason Jesus and his apostles skipped the fourth cup.

Scholars have speculated for centuries why they skipped the fourth cup. Scott Hahn offers the best answer why they did not drink the fourth cup, the cup that ended or consummated the Passover Meal. Recall that Jesus had said during the meal, “I shall not taste of the fruit of the vine again until I enter into the kingdom.” Hahn refers to the three times that Jesus fell down to the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cried out to His Father, “Abba, Father . . . All things are possible to Thee. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt” (Mark 14:36, RSV). Hahn asked, “what is this cup” about which Jesus was speaking?

In this regard, Hahn says that “some scholars suggest that this harkens back to an image used by Isaiah and Jeremiah to speak about the cup of God’s wrath that the Messiah, God’s suffering servant, must drink.” He concedes that there is probably a connection there, but he thinks that it is more likely that the unfinished cup represents a “connection between an interrupted liturgy that had been followed strictly up until the very end and this heartfelt, earnest plea and prayer of our Savior.”

Hahn attempts to prove his point by referring to Mark 15:23, which describes Jesus’ way to Calvary. Some people offered him some wine mingled with myrrh, which was an opiate, a pain-killer; however, he would not drink from it. Hahn asked “Why not?” He concedes that Jesus could have refused the offer because he was undergoing his ordeal to redeem mankind. But Hahn believes that there is more to it than that reason. He explains his reasoning by first reminding us that Jesus had said earlier that evening at the Last Supper that he would not “taste of the fruit of the vine again until I come into the kingdom” then by referring to John 19 where the Evangelist makes it perfectly clear that Jesus intended that sacrifice be the “culmination, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover.”

To prove his thesis, Hahn asks “why is it that Jesus happened to be wearing a seamless linen garment at the cross, when just coincidentally that’s what the priest was legislated to wear when he sacrificed the Passover? Here is the true priest, as well as the true victim.” Furthermore, “when he was crucified, unlike the two thieves whose legs had to be broken to expedite death, his bones were not broken. Why? To fulfill the scripture where it says, ‘None of his bones shall be broken.’” This quotation makes reference to the Jewish law that only unblemished lambs could be offered in sacrifice at the Temple. This law precluded the sacrifice of lambs with broken bones. Since Jesus was taking the place of the Passover Lamb, none of his bones could be broken either.

Then to drive his point home, Hahn quotes John 19: 28-30: “After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), ‘I thirst’. A bowl full of vinegar [cheap wine] stood

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there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." A hyssop branch was the same kind of branch the Israelites had used to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the doorpost the night before the angel of death passed over Egypt taking the lives of the Egyptian firstborn.

It was finished; Jesus had fulfilled the Scriptures to redeem mankind. He was about to enter his Father's kingdom. Nearing the end of his earthly life, Jesus said "I thirst" so he could drink from the sponge to fulfill the Scriptures; this was the fourth cup, the cup of the Passover Meal that consummated the supper. Up until that time, Jesus had refused the wine that had been offered to him. By his refusal to take the wine until right before His death, the consummation when he was about to pass over to his Father, he was fulfilling the Scriptures that he would not "taste of the fruit of the vine again until I enter into the kingdom."

To conclude this discussion of how Jesus said the first Mass, I shall quote from a transcript of a speech given by Hahn at length:

When Jesus said, "It is finished", and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit, his breath. The "it", of course you realize by now, is the Passover sacrifice. Because who is Jesus Christ? He is "the sacrifice of Egypt, the firstborn son. Remember, the Egyptians involuntarily had to offer up their firstborn sons as atonement for their own sins and wickedness. Christ dies for Egypt and the world. Plus, he is the Passover lamb, the unblemished lamb, without broken bones who offers himself up for the life of the world. This fits with John's gospel, because as soon as Jesus was introduced in chapter 1 of the fourth gospel by John the Baptist, what did John say? He said, 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.' And here is the lamb, headed for the altar of the cross, dying as a righteous firstborn and as an unblemished lamb. I believe that it's best to say in light of scripture that the sacrifice of Christ did not begin with the first spike, it didn't begin when the cross was sunk into the ground. It began in the upper room. That's where the sacrifice began. And I would also suggest that the Passover meal by which Jesus initiated the new Covenant in his own blood did not end in the upper room, but at Calvary. It's all of one piece. The sacrifice begins in the upper room with the institution of the Eucharist and it ends at Calvary. Calvary begins with the Eucharist. The Eucharist ends at Calvary."

This is why the Eucharist, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, makes present on our altars the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross at Calvary. Jesus is the Lamb of God who John the Baptist pointed out to his disciples at the Jordan River, because Jesus was to take the place of the Passover Lamb in a couple of years (John 1:35-42).

How to Prepare for Mass

Before we celebrate Mass, we should properly prepare ourselves. The Mass is a sacred event celebrated in a sacred place. Therefore, we should dress and act appropriately and not as if we

were going to the beach or to attend an athletic event or to play a sport. We should dress appropriately for the celebration of the Mass, which used to mean by wearing one's "Sunday Best." The way we dress expresses our attitude toward God and his sacraments. Moreover, the way we behave before and during the celebration will determine whether or not we are merely spectators or participants. The prominent twentieth century theologian Romano Guardini advised us that there are three things we must do in order to fully participate—that is to be present and aware of what is going on—in the Mass, we must recollect ourselves, be still, and be silent so we can listen. These are discussed below, in turn.

Composure (Recollection): Before we can fully participate in the Mass, we must learn to free ourselves from attractions or distractions from without and turmoil from within. In the parlance of a generation ago, one must become "calm, cool, and collected." This calming of the self is called composure or recollection. Recollection means collecting the scattered self and returning to the center of one's being. The person who is distracted by what is going on around him or herself or is daydreaming is not aware of what is happening before and during the Mass; he or she is simply not present; he or she is merely a spectator. Distracted persons are not themselves. Only composed persons can be fully aware of what is going on around them; only they are wide-awake, are present, and are ready to hear the word of God and participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We must be present to respond to God's outpouring of grace with adoration and love; we cannot participate if we are not there in mind, heart, and spirit, with attention, devotion, and love.

Our participation in the Mass is possible only with composure, a condition that is not easy to achieve and maintain, because of the attractions in our society and the inner turmoil that modern living causes in us. One must diligently practice achieving this state of mind, body, and spirit. We should begin to prepare ourselves for Mass even before we leave home. We should start to compose ourselves when we examine our consciences and consider the sacrifices we intend to make at Mass as discussed below in the Penitential Rite and Offertory sections. Composure is the only way that we can escape time and approach eternity, which is the Mass—Calvary made present and Heaven brought to earth.

Stillness: A congregation is a gathering of people united by faith and the love of God. Only to the extent that those at the celebration of the Mass are composed and fully aware of what is happening are they a congregation; otherwise, they are only an audience, a group of spectators. In order to be a congregation, a people must not only be physically present, but they must be composed and still as well. In order to achieve this, we should go to Church early if possible—at least 10-15 minutes before the beginning of Mass—to better achieve composure and stillness. It is in the stillness of the church that one can become more fully composed and still.

This is easier said than done in most Catholic Churches today. People coming late, leaving early, talking, visiting, making noise, looking around, squirming, shuffling about, coughing, moving around, and the like can be very distracting. It is as if though they have no idea why they are there. In the past, non-Catholics were always extremely impressed, even awestruck, with the stillness in a Catholic Church and the feeling of the sacred that was produced by it. Tragically, many of today's

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Catholics have lost a sense of the sacred and are no longer still, no longer reverent in church. This makes our task much more difficult; we will just have to work that much harder to compose ourselves, something for which God will amply reward us.

Silence and Listening: People in our modern world simply cannot stand silence; they constantly need something to stimulate and bombard their senses, whether it be the racket of modern music, the sound of the television or radio, the noise of motor vehicles, or the constant chatter of idle and superficial conversation. They are empty and require constant filling with sounds of various sorts. No wonder they never hear God!

One can hear what is being said in the liturgy only to the extent that he or she is composed, still, and silent. This is especially true of the reading of the word of God, the Holy Scriptures, for one must be present and aware to hear the word of God. The scriptures are meant to be listened to, for God is speaking to us. We can listen only to the extent that there is silence. The Adoration Chapel at St. Patrick Church has a sign that contains Psalm 46:10, which says “Be still, and know that I am God.” We are ready to participate in the celebration of the Mass only when we are composed, still, and silent; only then can we say as did the Lord’s faithful servants, Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8) and Ananias (Acts 9:10), “Here I am Lord”.

When the Mass Becomes Boring: You have no doubt heard people say that the Mass is boring, that they don’t get anything out of it. What they are really saying is that they do not know what the Mass is, or if they do, they are not participating and aware of what is going on; they are simply sitting in the pews as spectators rather than being participants; they are putting little or nothing into it. If one doesn’t put anything into something, he or she won’t get anything out of it. More often than not they are looking for entertainment, such as is found at a concert, a ballgame, or a movie, rather than to worship God. It is true that human beings become easily tired of events that occur over and over again, day after day, and in the case of the Mass, Sunday after Sunday. Routine and familiarity often lead to monotony and boredom, even to becoming bored at the most sublime event of all time—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Beautiful church architecture, religious art, and inspiring music once helped to raise the hearts and minds of participants at Mass to God. Modern architects and liturgists have all too often given us drab buildings, bland art, poor music, dull sermons, and tired liturgies, which contribute to our natural inclination to boredom. What are we to do when we become bored with Mass?

To begin, we must know and understand what the Mass is. But this is only a start; we need to seriously study the Mass all of our lives; we can never learn too much about it. We have learned that the Mass is a sacrament from which we can receive the grace of God and which makes present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Furthermore, it renews the covenant that God has made with the People of God, the Catholic Church. Moreover, the Mass is Heaven brought to earth. Each time you go to Mass we need to remind ourselves of our belief in these truths; we can’t be bored with that.

Up until now we have used your intellect to learn what the Mass is, now we must learn to use your

will to carry out our beliefs. When we attend Mass, we need to make a special effort to compose ourselves and to remain composed. This will help us to minimize distractions and calm ourselves from within. Moreover, it will help us to become aware of what is going on in the liturgy. Doing this is not easy as we discussed above. We must continually work hard during the Mass to concentrate on what is going on and be aware of what we are doing. However, there is only so much that we can do on your own; we shouldn't forget that God will play his part to help us too. When we have done all of these things, we will no longer be bored at Mass and all of the conditions that contribute to boredom will not matter, because we will know what we are doing and why we are doing it. We will be aware of what is going on and be a participant in the most important event that has ever occurred and will ever occur—the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Now let us examine the liturgy of the Mass.

The Liturgy of the Mass

Introductory Rites

At the beginning of the Entrance, the congregation gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist sings the Entrance song during the procession of the priest and his ministers from the front of the church to the altar at the back. The priest and the congregation sign themselves with the Cross. The Sign of the Cross is a prayer that goes back to the very early Church. In the early Church, Christians traced themselves with the Cross on their foreheads or as St. Augustine and St. Jerome tell us they traced the Cross on their foreheads, lips, and heart, much as we do today before the Gospel. When we sign ourselves we are expressing our belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption. Signing ourselves with the Cross summarizes our faith in a single gesture, and renews the covenant with God that began at our baptisms. By signing ourselves at the beginning of Mass, we are showing that we did not come to be spectators, but participants in the Paschal mystery. Because of what it means, we should sign ourselves with great care. St. Therese of Lisieux would get very disturbed with her fellow sisters who signed themselves carelessly. The penitential Rite follows.

Penitential Act: Lord have mercy! The *Didache* or catechism of the Apostles says that any participation in the Eucharist should begin with a confession of sins. This process should begin before the Mass begins. In fact, one should conduct a careful examination of conscience the night before or at least an hour or so before going to Mass. After accusing ourselves of sin before God and our neighbor, we throw ourselves at God's mercy when we say the *Kyrie*. In the *Kyrie* we ask each of the persons of the Trinity to have mercy on us sinners: Lord have mercy (the Father), Christ have mercy (the Son), Lord have mercy (the Holy Spirit). The *Kyrie* was part of the earliest liturgies of the Church.

The Gloria: Following the *Kyrie*, we give praise and honor to God in the *Gloria* for his love and mercy. This prayer has been around for at least since the second century. In fact, it was the song that the choirs of angels sang in the presence of the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth.

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Liturgy of the Word

Readings from Holy Scripture: St. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the Word of God made flesh (incarnate). Catholics who attend Mass daily hear almost the entire Bible read over a three-year cycle. The first reading is usually from the Old Testament, followed by either a recited or sung Psalm. The second reading is a reading from the New Testament Epistles or letters, followed by the reading of the Gospel by the priest or deacon. The Word should be revered as much as the Eucharist itself, because it is God speaking to us. When we hear the Scriptures, we are agreeing to live by them and we will be held accountable accordingly.

Homily: During the homily or sermon, the priest or deacon comments on the scriptures, during which he explains difficult passages and makes practical applications. The sermon doesn't need to be entertaining; its purpose is to instruct in the ways of God.

The Creed: The Nicene Creed is usually recited by the congregation at this time, but the Apostles Creed is sometimes substituted for it. When we recite the Creed we are professing our belief in the principle teachings of the Catholic Church. Countless Christians were martyred over the centuries because of their faithful and persistent belief in these doctrines. The Apostles Creed is a summary of the Faith handed on to us by the Apostles. The Nicene Creed is a later elaboration on the Apostles Creed to counter false teachings on the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Arius and others had denied that the Son was equal to the Father and was little more than a prophet. He taught that Jesus was not God, but just a special man. The Arian heresy was challenged at the Council of Nicaea in 325 by St. Athanasius and his bishop, St. Alexander of Alexandria, Egypt. The creed that we recite today came out of that first ecumenical council, but was further refined in the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Nicene Creed is the correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. We should think about the meaning of the Creed when we recite it; we should not recite it thoughtlessly. The Blessed Mother has told us in a private revelation that she is especially pleased with those who say the Creed thoughtfully and reverently.

General Intercessions: The Liturgy of the Word ends with intercessory prayers to God on behalf of the assembled community of believers, the Church, and the whole world.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Now we begin a different, but equally important part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Offertory: The ushers collect money from the congregation while the priest prepares the altar for the sacrifice that is to come. Bread, wine, and money are brought to the altar by the ushers to support the Church. In the early Church the congregation baked the bread and pressed the wine for the celebration. This is the appropriate time to offer our sacrifices to God the Father through the Son. At this time we offer our suffering, sorrow, work, schooling, and anything else that is

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pleasing to God. It is recommended that we consider our gifts when we examine our consciences the night before or at least before we arrive at Mass. Jesus will unite our imperfect sacrifice to his perfect and acceptable sacrifice and offer it to his Father. The priest prays over the gifts that they may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.

As a member of the priesthood of all believers we offer our sacrifices as well as Jesus' to the Father, but Jesus ordained only the priest to transform the bread and wine into his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. The priest is another Christ (*alter Christus*) who represents Jesus in his person (*in persona Christi*) in the administration of the sacraments. It is Jesus the High Priest who is speaking when the priest says the words of consecration at Mass or forgives us our sins at the sacrament of Penance.

The water that the priest pours into the wine to be consecrated symbolizes the union of Christ's human and divine natures, his sharing in our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, and the blood and water that flowed from His heart when the Roman soldier thrust his spear into his side. Moreover, the Blessed Mother plays a big role in the Offertory, for she offered her son, as well as her own suffering and sorrow, to the Father at Calvary so that the world could be redeemed. For this reason she is called the Co-Redemptrix. As we shall discuss in the section below, Calvary is made present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Eucharistic Prayer: Following the Offertory is the heart of the Mass, the Consecration. It begins when the priest says "The Lord be with you and the congregation responds with "And also with you." The priest follows with "Lift up your hearts, and the congregation responds. These prayers were practices in the earliest Church. Then the congregation says the Sanctus, the "Holy, Holy, Holy," which calls to mind how the saints and angels sing praises before the Heavenly throne found in Revelation 4:8. At this time the saints and angels join the congregation to praise and honor God. We are now present at the Last Supper with Jesus and his apostles.

The Consecration follows as the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi capitis*) says the words "This is my body," and "This is the chalice of my blood." Added to the latter are the words "the blood of the new and everlasting covenant," which makes reference to the covenant that fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. God promises in the new covenant, which is sealed by the blood of the lamb—Jesus Christ—to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper.

At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become the substances of Jesus' body and blood, even though they still appear to be bread and wine. Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine represents the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and we are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary

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Magdalen, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels, and the congregation. The Mass is literally Heaven brought to earth or better yet, earth lifted up to Heaven. At the end of the consecration, the priest, representing Jesus, says to continue doing this in memory of him.

The Eucharistic Prayer continues after the consecration with the Offering of the gifts and the Intercessions and ends with the Memorial Acclamation, “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again followed by the Doxology and the Great Amen.

Communion Rite: The Communion Rite begins with the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, the Lord’s Prayer. This is a most ancient liturgical practice. Following this we offer each other the Sign of Peace to carry out Jesus’ command to go and reconcile with our brothers and sisters before we receive him. When the bread is being broken we repeat the words of John the Baptist: “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world (John 1:29), have mercy on us”. Next we follow Jesus’ commandment to eat his body and drink his blood by receiving Holy Communion. In communion we renew our bond with the eternal family, the Holy Trinity and with God’s family on earth, his Church. This is the time that we should praise Jesus for his goodness and majesty, thank him for all of his blessings and gifts, express sorrow for your sins and make a firm resolution to sin no more, and ask favors for yourself and above all for others.

Jesus said in his Bread of Life sermon, that “Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). Holy Communion is the sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Before doing so we should carefully examine our consciences, because as St. Paul has told us: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). This means that one must be in the state of sanctifying grace, not in the state of mortal sin, to receive the sacrament worthily. “Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion” (*Catechism* No. 1385).

The Church requires that we receive the Holy Communion at least once a year, and if possible during the Easter season. However, the Church strongly recommends that we receive the Holy Communion every Sunday and on holy days, and even daily. To prepare for the worthy reception of Holy Communion, one must abstain from food at least one hour before reception. The main benefit of receiving Holy Communion is an intimate union with Jesus Christ in his full humanity and divinity. In this regard, Jesus said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:56). Receiving our Lord in Holy Communion increases and renews the life of grace we received at baptism. It unites us to Jesus Christ and cleanses our past venial sins and preserves us from future sins, for the more we share in the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is for us to separate ourselves from him by committing sins. Furthermore, communion strengthens our love of God and neighbor and helps us to become more

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detached from the things of this world that separate us from him. Moreover, those who receive Christ in Holy Communion are not only united more closely with Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church, but also more closely with his Body, the members of his Church. Of this matter St. Paul said, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Ordinarily non-Catholic Christians are not allowed to receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, but “When, in the Ordinary's [the bishop's] judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions” (*Catechism* No. 1401).

Concluding Rite: In the Mass we have been united with Christ’s sacrifice. At the conclusion of the Mass, the priest sends us out into the world to live the sacrifice we have just celebrated in our daily lives.

Metaphysics of the Sacrament of the Eucharist

In the section Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy of this website we discuss metaphysics. Fr. Hardon defines metaphysics in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “The science of being, as being; or of the absolutely first principles of being. Also called ontology, first philosophy, the philosophy of being, the philosophy of first causes, wisdom.” In this instance we are trying to discover in human terms what happens during the consecration of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

For centuries there existed a method of ascertaining the cause of things, which accounted for all aspects of their existence. Fr. Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines cause as “A principle from which something originates with consequent dependence. It is a being that in some way directly affects the being or change of something else. It is that which gives existence in some way to another or is the reason for the existence of another being.” In other words, a cause is something, such as a person or condition that is responsible for producing an effect or consequence in something.

Philosophers have identified four principles of the causes of things that must be considered to fully account for the existence of things: material cause; formal cause; efficient cause; and final cause. For anything to exist or be, all four of these operations must be accounted for, otherwise it simply couldn’t exist or be. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle first formulated the method and it was refined in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics or School-men, especially St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Below we will attempt to explain the doctrine of Transubstantiation from the point of view of the Four Causes of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy.

In the history of philosophy, numerous explanations have been given to account for causation. The most famous and lasting of these was Aristotle's in the fourth century B.C. He identified four elements to completely account for the cause of something:

1. **Material cause or matter:** Fr. Hardon defines matter as “That out of which something is produced or made. “[It is the] passive element in any change, which is united with the active element to form one physical being. [It is the] substratum in every change that itself remains unchanged.” In other words, the material cause or matter is the basic stuff out of which a thing is made. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. The material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and any other building materials used in its construction. These things are necessary to build a house, because it couldn't exist without them. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. In our case the matter is the bread.
2. **Formal cause or form:** The formal cause is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled; it is the pattern or essence determining the creation of a thing; it is what which makes something what it is; it is that which makes something one thing and not another. It is the plan or blueprint of a thing. It is the organizing or activation principle of a thing. Fr. Hardon defines form as “The specific element in a being which communicates itself to the indeterminate or less determinate element (matter) and together with this matter or substratum constitutes the whole being. Form is more than the shape of something, because things with the same nature can take many different shapes. All human beings have the same essence or nature, but they come in many different shapes. Thus, the blueprints are the formal cause of the house we are describing. They are an essential part of this particular house, because otherwise there would exist nothing more than piles of materials. The materials have the capacity to be used to build many different other types of houses, or even things other than houses.
3. **Efficient cause:** The efficient cause is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing the matter and form together in the production of a thing, in the case that we have been using, our particular house; it is the agent that imposed this form on that matter; it is the force or agent producing an effect. The change in substances is explained by something moving from potency to act. Efficient cause is what we ordinarily think of as cause; that which has a cause and effect relationship. A cause is that which is responsible for an effect or change in something. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blueprints for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it is without their contribution.
4. **Final cause:** Lastly, the final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists; so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings. This is part of the

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explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Aristotle believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality.

To illustrate further, let's use a chair as an example. The material cause of a particular chair is the wood out of which it is made, the formal cause is the shape into which it was fashioned, the efficient cause was the carpenter by whom the chair was made, and the final cause is the sitting for the sake of which it was designed. Aristotle and the schoolmen also included a fifth cause, the first cause, usually conceived of as God.

The Scholastic theory of causation has been used to explain the Sacraments. Most older Catholics will have heard of the terms matter and form used when applied to the Sacraments. These terms are an application of Aristotelian or Scholastic philosophy to the Sacraments. The material cause or matter of a sacrament is the materials used to perform the sacrament. The formal cause or form is the actualizing principle of the sacrament; it is what makes something happen.

For example, water is the matter or material cause of the Sacrament of Baptism. Theologians have distinguished between, remote and proximate matter. For example, the remote matter of Baptism is water and the proximate matter is the pouring of (or immersion in) water. The proximate matter of the anointing of the sick is the oil of olives blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter is the application of the oil. The remote matter of Confirmation is holy chrism, which is a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter consists in the imposition of hands and anointing with chrism. The form of the Sacrament, the actualizing principle, is the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus the Trinity is the efficient cause of the effects of the Sacrament. The final cause of the Sacrament of Baptism is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered. For example, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity washes away Original Sin and infuses Sanctifying Grace at Baptism. The final cause is to make the baptized person a child of God the Father, and a brother or sister of his son Jesus as well as an heir to Heaven.

Substantial and Accidental Qualities of Bread and Wine: We start out with the substances of bread and wine. Anne Carroll writes in her *Following Christ in the World*, states that a substance is "that to which it belongs to exist in itself." Fr. Hardon's *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines substance as "A being whose essence requires that it exist in itself. Fr. O'Donnell says in *Hooked on Philosophy: Thomas Aquinas Made Easy* that "Substance is whatever is a natural kind of thing and exists in its own right." Examples are rocks, trees, animals, bread, wine, etc., because they exist in their own right; they do not exist in something else.

On the other hand, substances always possess accidents, which the essence is to exist in another substance, rather than in itself. Anne Carroll puts it another way where she defines accident as “that to which it belongs to exist in another.” Fr. Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that accidents are “Things whose essence naturally requires that they exist in another being. Accidents are also called the appearances, species, or properties of a thing. These may be either physical, such as quantity, or modal, such as size or shape. Supernaturally, accidents can exist, in the absence of their natural substance, as happens with the physical properties of bread and wine after Eucharistic consecration.” Accidents are qualities that can't exist in themselves, but require substances for their existence. In other words, accidents can exist only in substances. Substance and accidents make up Aristotle's ten categories of being, one being substance and the other nine accidents, such as quantity, quality, relation, action, place, time, etc. In our present case we are considering the substances of bread and wine, which exist in themselves, and possess accidental qualities like color, shape, texture, odor, etc.

The Matter and Form of Bread and Wine: Matter is the “stuff” out of which things (beings) are made. What matter becomes depends on the form it assumes or takes on. Forms are “what organizes matter and make it intelligible.” “[They] are the source of order, unity, and identity of objects.” Forms are the organizing principle that makes things “what” they are and not something else. It organizes matter into something. It is the plan, pattern, or blueprint from which things are assembled. The substantial form of a substance consists of its essential properties, the properties that its matter needs in order to be the kind of substance that it is. When matter assumes or takes on a form, the composite (matter and form together) produces a substance. The thing to remember is that neither matter nor form exists by itself. By themselves they are simply concepts in our minds; they are simply abstractions. However, when they combine, they become existing things; they possess being. In order for matter to exist as an independent being or thing, it must possess a form to make it what it is. The combination of matter and form make an individual being or thing. For example, the substances of flour and grapes will not become bread or wine without the organizing principle that forms or transforms them into these substances.

Bread is composed of flour, which is a substance with accidental qualities of odor, texture, color, shape, and the like. The flour could have been made (formed) into hundreds of other substances instead of bread, such as spaghetti, vermicelli, spaggetini, macaroni, cookies, cakes, pies, pasta, donuts, or dozens of others. Wine is made from grapes, which could have been made (formed) into substances other than wine, such as raisins, grape juice, etc. When flour is formed into bread and grapes into wine, the substances of flour and grapes undergo substantial changes, that is, they become new or different substances; they take on new forms. They could also undergo accidental changes if the qualities change as well, changes such as color, shape, texture, and the like. Matter becomes a substance, (a being or thing)—whose nature it is to exist in and for itself and not in another—when it combines with form.

The Act and Potency of Bread and Wine: Once something comes into existence, i.e. it actually exists, it is said to be in a state of act or actuality. Fr. Hardon defines “act” in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “That which is not potential, i.e., that which is not in potency but in act. The existent

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as distinct from the merely possible.” He defines “potency as “The capacity of a being to be, to act, or to receive.” Act is what a thing is right now; what it actually is. It is a state of real existence rather than possibility. Potency is then what it possibly (potentially) can become. A person is a person in act. He or she is potentially many things: good or bad; physically weak or strong; a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a police officer.

To apply this to the Eucharist, flour is a substance that actually exist or has being. However, it also possesses potency or potential to become many different things (beings), including bread. The same is true of grapes; they can be made (formed into one of several things, including wine. When flour takes on the form of bread, it is transformed into the substance of bread and not something else, like spaghetti. When grapes are made into wine, they assume a new form that makes them wine and not something else, like raisins. They no longer have the form of flour or grapes. After the transformations (see the words “trans” meaning across or change and “form” in the preceding word) of flour into bread and grapes into wine, they actually (in act) are the substances of bread and wine, each with its new potentialities (potencies). The potential that we are about to consider is the potential of the substances of bread and wine to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Now we are ready to consider the other elements in addition to matter and form that are necessary to transforming bread and wine into the substances of his Body and Blood.

The Four Causes of Being applied to Transubstantiation: The four causes of every being or thing as follows: Material Cause; Formal Cause; Efficient Cause; Final Cause.

Material Cause: The matter is that out of which something is produced or made. In other words, the material cause or matter is the basic stuff out of which a thing is made. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. The basic stuff out which bread and wine is made is wheat in the form of flour and grapes. However, the matter would remain matter if it weren’t formed into something by a formal cause.

Formal Cause: Each and every individual thing is composed of both matter and form. The matter is the stuff out of which something is made. The formal cause is the pattern or essence in conformity with which the matter or materials are assembled; it is the pattern or essence determining the creation of a thing; it is that which makes something what it is and not something else; it is that which makes something one thing and not another. It is the plan or blueprint of a thing. It is the organizing or activation principle of a thing. . In the case of the Eucharist, the formal cause or activation principle is the words of consecration. It this principle (the words of consecration) that forms the substances of bread and wine into the substances of Christ’s Body and Blood.

During the consecration at Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, “This is my body,” This is the chalice of my blood.” At the words of consecration the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In other words, the substances of the bread and wine are changed (transformed) into the

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substances of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity. The Church calls this transformation transubstantiation, which means that the substances of bread and wine really become, (are transformed into) the substances of Jesus' Body and Blood, even though the accidents or species appear to be bread and wine. By accidents is meant that the Body and Blood still looks like, smells like, feels like, and tastes like bread and wine, but truly are the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fulfills the promise of Jesus' "Bread of Life" or "Eucharistic" sermon in John 6.

Fr. Hardon explains transubstantiation for us this way in *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

[Transubstantiation is] the complete change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood by a validly ordained priest during the consecration at Mass, so that only the accidents (also called appearances or species) of bread and wine remain. While the faith behind the term itself was already believed in apostolic times, the term itself was a later development. With the Eastern Fathers before the sixth century, the favored expression was *meta-ousiosis*, 'change of being'; the Latin tradition coined the word *transubstantiatio*, 'change of substance,' which was incorporated into the creed of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Council of Trent, in defining the 'wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the wine into the blood' of Christ, added 'which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation' (Denzinger 1652). After transubstantiation, the accidents of bread and wine do not inhere in any subject or substance whatever. Yet they are not make-believe they are sustained in existence by divine power." (Etym. Latin *trans-*, so as to change + *substantia*, substance: *transubstantio*, change of substance.).

Fr. Hardon says, "They are not mere appearances as though these physical properties were unreal. But they are appearances because after the consecration they lack any substance that underlies them or in which they inhere."

Moreover, the separate consecration of the bread and wine—the double consecration—symbolizes the death of Jesus on the Cross, the separation of his blood from his body. Calvary is made present at this time and participants at Mass are standing at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalene, John the beloved disciple, the other women, the holy saints and angels, and the congregation. The *Catechism* says about the sacrificial aspect of the Mass, "Because it is the memorial of Christ's Pass-over, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: 'This is my body which is given for you' and 'This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.' In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he 'poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (No. 1365).

The Last Supper and Calvary are made present during the celebration. It is important to stress though that Jesus does not die at every Mass; the one time he died 2000 years ago is made present on the altar, so we can participate in the event that earned for us our salvation.

Efficient Cause: The change in substances is explained by something moving from potency to act. The bread and wine are composed of act and potency; meaning that the bread is actually bread but has the potential to be transformed into the Body of Christ, and the wine is actually wine, but has the potential to be transformed into Christ's Blood. The cause of a change of this type requires an agent outside of itself, what is called the efficient cause. The transforming agent or efficient cause in this case is the priest acting on behalf of Christ, who is the primary cause of the transformation. Christ speaks the words of consecration through his instrument, the priest, who is an *alter Christus*, another Christ. When the priest representing the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) says the words, "This is my body," "This is the chalice of my blood," the substances of bread and wine are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. He is made present on the altar in his full humanity and divinity.

Final Cause: The final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists. A philosopher says that according to Aristotle "[The final cause] is that for the sake of which motion happens. It is the end or purpose for which the motion takes place." Fr. Hardon defines final cause as "The end or purpose that an intelligent being has in performing an action or producing an effect." Another scholar states that, "The final cause is the fourth, extrinsic principle of process, giving the reason why efficient causes go into action, whether consciously, in the case of conscious and intelligent agents, or unconsciously, when the final cause is in the mind of him who administers providentially the process of changes in the cosmos." The final cause of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered, which is to provide food and nourishment for the soul in the form of God's grace, which in the case of sanctifying grace is his life within us.

Aristotle rightly believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality, which in this case is the reality of the Eucharist. Applying Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics to the Eucharist provides us with a much deeper understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

St. Thomas considered final causation to be the "cause of causes"; that is, the other three causes are directed toward the final cause. In this regard, Fr. Maurice De Wulf tells us in his *The Philosophical System of Thomas Aquinas*:

The hierarchical order that exists between the four causes results from their nature. Finality attracts (consciously or not) and persuades a being to exercise its activities. Efficient causality tends towards the end in view, and the result of action is a new union of matter and form. When an artist undertakes to chisel a statue, it is his purpose which directs the designs, the choice of the material, the chiseling itself. The first intention of the artist is the last thing to be realized. It is not otherwise with the aim of nature: in the order of intention the final cause comes first; but in the order of execution it is the last to be realized.

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In other words, the first three causes are directed toward the final cause, otherwise they would have no purpose in existing. The priest speaks the words of consecration (the proximate formal cause) to effect a change (the efficient cause) in the matter of bread and wine (the material cause) into Christ's Body and Blood (the final cause). The first three causes would not have existed unless the priest had the intention or goal of making Christ present on the altar.

Holy Communion: Jesus said in his Bread of Life sermon, that "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Holy Communion is the sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Just as bread and wine are food and nourishment for the body, the Body and Blood of Christ are food and nourishment for the soul. Although the consecrated Bread is truly the Body of Christ, and the consecrated wine is truly his Blood, Jesus is fully present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in both consecrated substances. Therefore, when we receive either the consecrated bread or the consecrated wine, we are receiving the complete Jesus, because in reality he can never be separated from either in life. Of course, we can explain the Eucharist only to a point using reason, because it is a great mystery far beyond our comprehension until we see Jesus face to face in Heaven.

In conclusion, Transubstantiation is the complete change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood by a validly ordained priest during the consecration at Mass, so that only the accidents of bread and wine remain. While the faith behind the term itself was already believed in apostolic times, the term itself was a later development. With the Eastern Fathers before the sixth century, the favored expression was *meta-ousiosis*, "change of being"; the Latin tradition coined the word *transubstantiatio*, "change of substance", which was incorporated into the creed of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Council of Trent, in defining the "wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the wine into the blood" of Christ, added "which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation" (Denzinger 1652). After transubstantiation, the accidents of bread and wine do not inhere in any subject or substance whatever. Yet they are not make-believe they are sustained in existence by divine power. (Etym. Latin trans-, so as to change + *substantia*, substance: *transubstantio*, change of substance.)

Eucharistic Errors

There developed several errors in regard to the reality of the substances in the Eucharist over the past five centuries.

The Error of Transignification: This view means that when the consecration at Mass is performed, only a change of meaning or significance of the bread and wine takes place; their substances do not change. Fr. Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

[Transignification is] the view of Christ's presence in the Eucharist which holds that the meaning or significance of the bread and wine is changed by the words of consecration. the

consecrated elements are said to signify all that Christians associate with the Last Supper; they have a higher value than merely food for the body.

This view is contrary to the Catholic view of transubstantiation, which states that at the words of consecration the substances of bread and wine are literally transformed into the substances of the Body and Blood of Christ. In transignification, the consecrated elements are said to signify all that Christians associate with the Last Supper. Consequently, the bread and wine acquire a higher meaning than merely food for the body, but they simply remain bread and wine. In other words, the meaning of the bread and wine changes, but not the matter or substance. Something that had served a profane use now in the words of the twentieth century theologian Karl Rahner “becomes the dwelling place and the symbol of Christ who is present and gives Himself to His own.” Fr. Hardon says that through various theologians, such as Rahner, the idea of transignification has permeated the Eucharistic theology of whole nations. The theory of transignification was condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), if it is understood as denying transubstantiation.

The Error of Transfinalization: This view means that the purpose or finality of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is changed by the words of consecration, but what remains after the consecration is still bread and wine. In other words, the bread and wine now serve a new function as sacred elements that arouse the faith of the people in Christ’s redemptive love. As one can readily see, the meaning of transignification and transfinalization are similar, except that in each case, the bread and wine remain bread and wine after the consecration.

The main thing to remember about both of these views is there is no change in their being bread and wine at the consecration—they merely take on a new meaning. The theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, who was the leading proponent of transfinalization tells us that the purpose of the Eucharistic elements is simply to make Christ’s presence more intimate. Proponents of both views speak of the Real Presence, but their idea of real presence is that Christ is present both before and after the consecration, but in a more intimate way afterwards. Somehow the host mysteriously mediates between the Lord and his church and the individual believer. Essentially this is a Protestant notion of the Eucharist. It is sort of like that after the consecration Jesus is present only to those who are aware of his presence or that he is present among those who gathered together in his name only in a spiritual sense. Like transignification, this theory was condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) if transfinalization is taken to deny the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

The Error of Consubstantiation: Fr. Hardon states that Consubstantiation is “the belief, contrary to Catholic doctrine, that in the Eucharist the body and blood of Christ coexist with the bread and wine after the Consecration of the Mass. John Wyclif (1324-84) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) professed consubstantiation because they denied transubstantiation.” In other words, at the words of consecration, Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, perhaps only in a spiritual sense, but the substances of bread and wine remain bread and wine.

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What has been the consequence of the spread of these and other alien notions among Catholics? Fr. Hardon says that these and other alien ideas have caused Catholics to lose their belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, which explains why millions of once professed Catholics no longer genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. He asked:

Who would genuflect before a piece of bread?" [Father goes on], "Thirty years of erroneous teaching about the Real Presence has deeply affected and infected the minds of millions—and I mean that figure—millions of still professed Catholics. Pope John Paul speaks of this dissemination of untruth in seminaries and universities—Holy Father how right you are, how sadly right you are. These ideas have penetrated into the minds of the leaders in the Catholic Church both among the clergy and among the laity and among the erroneous ideas I place at root the teaching about the Real Presence." [He concludes] Believe me there is much more at stake, much more than meets the eye. Everything in the Catholic faith depends on whether Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist as the Real Presence. Why do we say this? Because the Real Presence implies and includes the teaching that Christ ordained the Apostles at the Last Supper. He gave them the priestly power to change bread and wine into His own flesh and blood.

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Faith, and anything that calls into questions its efficacy is detrimental to the Faith.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



Jesus said in his Bread of Life sermon, that "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Holy Communion is the sacrament in which we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Before doing so we should carefully examine our consciences, because as St. Paul has told us: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of

the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). This means that one must be in the state of sanctifying grace, not in the state of mortal sin, to receive the sacrament worthily. "Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion" (*Catechism* No. 1385).

The Church requires that we receive the Holy Communion at least once a year, and if possible during the Easter season. However, the Church strongly recommends that we receive the Holy Communion every Sunday and on holy days, and even daily. To prepare for the worthy reception of Holy Communion, one must abstain from food at least one hour before reception.

The main benefit of receiving Holy Communion is an intimate union with Jesus Christ in his full humanity and divinity. In this regard, Jesus said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Receiving our Lord in Holy Communion increases and renews the life of grace we received at baptism. It unites us to Jesus Christ and cleanses our past venial sins and preserves us from future sins, for the more we share in the life of Christ and progress in His friendship, the more difficult it is for us to separate ourselves from Him by committing sins. Furthermore, communion strengthens our love of God and neighbor and helps us to become more detached from the things of this world that separate us from Him. Moreover, those who receive Christ in Holy Communion are not only united more closely with Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church, but also more closely with His Body, the members of his Church. Of this matter St. Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Ordinarily non-Catholic Christians are not invited to receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church, but "When, in the Ordinary's [the bishop's] judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will,

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provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions" (*Catechism* No. 1401).

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Pope John Paul II said in Ireland on September 29, 1979:

It was with great joy that I received the news that the Irish Bishops had asked all the faithful to go to Confession as part of a great spiritual preparation for my visit to Ireland. You could not have given me a greater gift. And if today there is someone who is still hesitating, for one reason or another, please remember this: the person who knows how to acknowledge the truth of guilt, and asks Christ for forgiveness, enhances his own human dignity and manifests spiritual greatness. Because of Christ's love and mercy, there is no sin that is too great to be forgiven; there is no sinner who will be rejected. Every person who repents will be received by Jesus Christ with forgiveness and immense love."



To be forgiven for sin one must first experience conversion and become contrite, that is, having sorrow for one's sins. Fear of the loss of Heaven is sufficient (imperfect contrition), but sorrow because one has offended God who loves us and who sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for our sins is a much greater motive (perfect contrition). The next step in the healing process for Catholics is confession. One must confess his or her serious sins to a priest who represents Jesus Christ. The final step in reconciliation with God is penance or satisfaction, which includes a firm resolution to sin no more in the future. Moreover, one must be willing to do penance to pay for the damage caused by one's sins. This could take the form of prayers, performing good works, paying for something stolen or broken, setting matters straight when one has lied, especially if the lie hurt someone's reputation, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and the like. One's penances can be applied to oneself, the conversion of sinners, the poor souls in Purgatory, and others.

Sins that are committed after Baptism are forgiven by the sacrament of confession, penance, or reconciliation. Jesus instituted this sacrament when he said to the Apostles during his first appearance to them in the Upper Room after his resurrection, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22-23). The priest who forgives sins is representing Jesus Christ. It is Christ who forgives us our sins. The five steps to making a good confession are as follows:

1. Examine our consciences
2. Be sorry for our sins
3. Make a firm purpose of amendment

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4. Confess our sins to a priest
5. Perform our penances

Repentance that is motivated by love for God is called perfect contrition; repentance that is based on other motives, especially the fear of Hell and the loss of Heaven, is called imperfect contrition or sorrow.

After praying to God for his light and grace, some preliminary questions that the Church recommends that we consider when making an examination of conscience are as follows:

- Am I determined to courageously call good and evil by their proper name? Do I sincerely want to be set free from sin, to turn again to God, to begin a new life, and to enter into a deeper friendship with God through this confession?
- In past confessions, did I forget to mention, or deliberately conceal, any grave sins?
- Have I received Holy Communion while conscious of having committed a mortal sin but not having gone to confession?
- Did I perform the penance I was given in my last confession? Did I make reparation for any injury to others? Have I been sincere in my efforts to lead a better life in keeping with the Gospel?

The best way to examine one conscience is to obtain a good list of sins broken down into violations of the Ten Commandments, or an examination of conscience in relationship to God, neighbor, and self, or an examination of conscience based on violations of the seven deadly or capital sins. To obtain reconciliation with God, one must confess to a priest all the unconfessed mortal sins he remembers after having carefully examined his conscience. Although it is not required that one confess venial sins, the Church strongly recommends this practice. (See the section “The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount” in this website for details of example of sins.)

The following describes the process of making a confession:

- The priest will begin with the Sign of the Cross.
- The penitent begins by saying “Bless me Father for I have sinned, it has been _____ (number of days, weeks, months, etc.) since my last confession. These are my sins”.
- Confess all mortal sins committed since your last confession by kind and number. You may also confess any venial sins.
- At the end of your confession say these or similar words: “For these and all the sins of my life I am sorry.”
- The priest might ask questions for clarification or give the penitent some counsel on a point from your confession.
- The priest will give the penitent a penance.
- The penitent makes an act of contrition in these or similar words: O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all of my sins because of Thy just punishments. But most of all because they offend Thee my God, who art all good and deserving

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of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more, and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.

- The priest will give the penitent absolution. (The words necessary for forgiveness are “I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”). When the priest speaks it is truly Jesus who is speaking

The priest will probably propose that the penitent perform acts of satisfaction or penance to repair the damages caused by one's sins. Penance also helps one to re-establish habits appropriate for followers of Christ.

The *Catechism* of the Catholic Church lists the following spiritual effects of the sacrament of Penance:

- reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace;
- reconciliation with the Church;
- remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins;
- remission, at least in part, of temporal punishments resulting from sin;
- peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation;
- an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle (No. 1496).

The *Catechism* states, that “Individual and integral confession of grave sins followed by absolution remains the only ordinary means of reconciliation with God and with the Church” (No. 1497).

THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK



The *Catechism* says the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick that, “The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments there is one especially intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness, the Anointing of the Sick: This sacred anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to indeed by Mark, but is recommended to the faithful and promulgated by James the apostle and brother of the Lord” (No. 1511).

From the earliest days of the Church, we have testimonies to the practice of anointings of the sick with holy oil. The sacrament was usually conferred only on those who were in danger of dying, and was known as “Extreme Unction.” Nonetheless, there was often hope that God would restore the health of the sick person if it would be conducive to his or her salvation.

However, since the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1965, “The sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing them on the forehead and hands with duly blessed oil—pressed from olives or from other plants—saying, only once: ‘Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up’” (*Catechism*, No.1513).

The sacrament is not reserved only for those near death, for as soon as any member of the Church begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the sacrament can be administered. If the anointed person recovers his or her health, the sacrament can again be administered in the case of another serious illness. Furthermore, if during the same illness the person's condition becomes more serious, the sacrament may be given again. Moreover, the Church recommends that those about to undergo a serious operation be anointed. This holds true for the elderly who become frailer (*Catechism*, No. 1515). Only priests can administer the sacrament. The sacrament is administered by the priest laying his hands on the sick person while praying over them; then he anoints the sick person with holy oil blessed by a bishop.

The *Catechism* lists the following effects of the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick:

- **A particular gift of the Holy Spirit:** The first grace of this sacrament is one of strengthening, peace and courage to overcome the difficulties that go with the condition of serious illness or the frailty of old age. This grace is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews trust and faith in God and strengthens against the temptations of the evil one, the temptation to discouragement and anguish in the face of death.¹³⁵ This assistance from

the Lord by the power of his Spirit is meant to lead the sick person to healing of the soul, but also of the body if such is God's will.¹³⁶ Furthermore, "if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven (No. 1520)

- **Union with the passion of Christ:** By the grace of this sacrament the sick person receives the strength and the gift of uniting himself more closely to Christ's Passion: in a certain way he is consecrated to bear fruit by configuration to the Savior's redemptive Passion. Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus (N. 1521).
- **An ecclesial grace:** The sick who receive this sacrament, "by freely uniting themselves to the passion and death of Christ," "contribute to the good of the People of God. "By celebrating this sacrament the Church, in the communion of saints, intercedes for the benefit of the sick person, and he, for his part, though the grace of this sacrament, contributes to the sanctification of the Church and to the good of all men for whom the Church suffers and offers herself through Christ to God the Father (No. 1522).
- **A preparation for the final journey:** If the sacrament of anointing of the sick is given to all who suffer from serious illness and infirmity, even more rightly is it given to those at the point of departing this life; so it is also called *sacramentum exeuntium* (the sacrament of those departing). The Anointing of the Sick completes our conformity to the death and Resurrection of Christ, just as Baptism began it. It completes the holy anointings that mark the whole Christian life: that of Baptism which sealed the new life in us, and that of Confirmation which strengthened us for the combat of this life. This last anointing fortifies the end of our earthly life like a solid rampart for the final struggles before entering the Father's house (No. 1523)

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS



There are three degrees of the ordained ministry: bishops; priests; and deacons. The bishops' ordination make them members of the episcopal college and the heads of dioceses. As successors of the apostles and members of the college of bishops, they share the apostolic responsibility and mission of the entire Church. They are under the direct authority of the Pope, who is the successor of St. Peter.

Although the ordained ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate in the one priesthood of Christ, they differ in their respective roles. The *Catechism* says of the difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the laity: “The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*)” (No. 1592). To quote the *Catechism* again in regard to the sacrament of Holy Orders: “St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: ‘I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands’ (2 Tim 1:6), and ‘If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task.’ (1 Tim 3:1) To Titus he said: ‘This is why I left you in Crete, that you amend what was defective, and appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed you’” (Titus 1:5) (No. 1590).

The ordained priesthood is ministerial: that is, a role of ordained priests is to minister to the spiritual needs of their congregations. “That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service. It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a ‘sacred power’ which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all. ‘The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him’” (*Catechism*, No. 1551).

The ordained priesthood is sacerdotal: In addition, “the ordained priesthood is sacerdotal; that is, another role of ordained priests is to administer the sacraments as a representative of Jesus Christ. The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ—Head of the Church—before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice” (*Catechism*, No. 1552). Only the ordained priest can represent Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and forgive sins in his name in the confessional.

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Priests are the bishop's co-workers. They form the presbyterium which has responsibility with the bishop for the particular Church. The bishop assigns them to a particular parish community or some other office in the diocese. In the Latin Church, ordinarily only men who freely embrace celibacy are ordained priests.

Deacons; Although deacons do not share in the ministerial priesthood, ordination gives them important functions in the ministry of the word of God, the liturgy, pastoral governance, and charitable activities. They perform these functions under the pastoral authority of their bishop. Only baptized men who have been deemed suitable for the ministry are eligible for the office.

Bishops confer the sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees. The sacrament is conferred by the laying on of hands "followed by a solemn prayer of consecration asking God to grant the ordinand the graces of the Holy Spirit required for his ministry. Ordination imprints an indelible sacramental character" (*Catechism* No. 1597).

All of us share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in some manner. The laity exercise the "priesthood of the laity" or the "common priesthood of the faithful." God had promised Moses as part of his covenant with the Israelites that "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). This priesthood has been continued in the New and Everlasting Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ with the People of God. The Priesthood of the Laity is sometimes referred to as the Priesthood of All Believers. Regarding the laity's priesthood, the *Catechism* states, "Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church 'a kingdom, priests for his God and Father.' The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood" (No. 1546).

The layperson can perform his or her priestly role in many ways. Simply by performing well one's vocation as husband, wife, child, worker, etc., one bears witness to the Christian Faith. Performing some of the many ministries open to the laity, such as catechist, server, reader, commentator, cantor, choir member, and other liturgical functions as well as various other parish ministries is another way of witnessing our faith. Participating in social service and charitable activities is another priestly role. And let us not forget the sacrifices we offer to God at Holy Mass. As long as we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of God and the benefit of others, as long as we give of ourselves—time, talent, and treasure—for the love of God and neighbor, we are performing a priestly role.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

Then *Catechism* says of Holy Matrimony, “The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament” (No. 1660). Furthermore, “The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life” (No. 1661).



From a Catholic perspective, the family is a communion of persons whether it be the uncreated Trinitarian Family of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit or a created human family of father, mother, and children. The natural family of father, mother, and children is the mirror image of the Holy Trinity. Men and women must be husbands and wives to be fully complete in God's image and likeness, just as the Trinity must be three divine persons to be complete. The *Catechism* says that “A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family. The family is established by the consent of the spouses and its primary purpose is for the procreation and education of children and its secondary purpose is the love of the spouses.”

Moreover, Pope John Paul II and others have referred to the family as the domestic church, “for, it is ‘a community of faith, hope, and charity’ and ‘it assumes singular importance in the Church.’ It is ‘a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.’ Moreover, ‘In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.’” Moreover, “The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called ‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity” (*Catechism*, No.1666).

True Love verses Romantic Love

True love is Christian love. As John tells us, God is love, so when we love it is God loving through

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us. The *Catechism* states regarding this matter: “Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: ‘It is not good that the man should be alone.’ The woman, ‘flesh of his flesh,’ his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a ‘helpmate’; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been ‘in the beginning: So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Christian married love is based on a decision to care for the loved one in accordance with God’s will, especially to care for his or her eternal soul.

On the other hand, Romantic love is based on physical attraction and emotion and one is often blinded by the “rose colored glasses of romance” when selecting a mate for marriage. The consideration of romantic love in our society makes selecting a mate very difficult and prone to mismatches. It also militates against “true love”. Romantic love will not “conquer all”. If not Romantic Love, then what are the principal purposes of marriage? The principal purposes of marriage are as follows:

- Procreative (begetting and socialization of children}
- Unitive (fulfillment and love of man and woman)

Conditions that create an indissoluble bond in marriage

In regard to consent of the partners, the *Catechism* states, “Marriage is based on the consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful and fruitful love” (No. 1662). Therefore, the following conditions are required for a valid marriage to occur:

- Must be free act of wills
- Consent is irrevocable
- Equal claims of man and wife
- Must intend to establish a marriage

Even if one or the other of the partners does not live up to the agreement, a marriage where all four of the above conditions are satisfied is valid and irrevocable.

Obstacles to valid marriage

The following are obstacles to a valid marriage:

- Lack of sufficient reason
- Lack of discretionary judgment regarding the rights and obligations of marriage

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- Psychological immaturity or stability
- Lack of intent to establish a permanent marriage
- Force or fear
- False information
- No intention to have children
- Intention to be unfaithful
- Intention to dissolve marriage if one becomes dissatisfied

Impediments to marriage (marriage is forbidden unless a dispensation is obtained)

The following are impediments to marriage:

- Not old enough
- Impotency
- Living spouses from an earlier marriage
- Potential spouse is not baptized
- The intended spouse is a priest or deacon
- The intended spouse is a nun under vows
- Force or fear
- Abduction of intended spouse
- Murder of intended spouse's mate
- Degrees of kinship (can't marry brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle, etc.)
- In-laws (can't marry mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, or daughter in-law)
- Son or daughter of man or woman one is living with adopted son or daughter
- Adopted siblings can't marry one another

Reasons for the indissolubility of marriage

Jesus didn't permit the dissolution of validly contracted marriages, even unhappy marriages for the following reasons:

- For the good of children
- For the good of society
- For the good of the individuals

Reasons that the marriage ceremony must be public

The marriage ceremony must be public, usually in a Church. In this regard the *Catechism* states,

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“Since marriage establishes the couple in a public state of life in the Church, it is fitting that its celebration be public, in the framework of a liturgical celebration, before the priest (or a witness authorized by the Church), the witnesses, and the assembly of the faithful” (No. 1663).

The meaning of divorce

Divorce is strictly a civil procedure that declares a marriage ended and leaves the former mates free to marry again. The Catholic Church allows civil divorce for various reasons, but it does not permit those who have a validly contracted marriage to remarry, because although civilly divorced, they are still considered married in the eyes of the Church.

Reasons the divorce rate has increased so rapidly among Catholics in the U.S.

Among the reasons the divorce rate has increased so rapidly among Catholics in the U.S. since 1965 are as follows:

- Interfaith marriages (Catholic/Protestant, Catholic/Jewish, Catholic/other religions, Catholic/pagan).
- Couples not understanding what marriage is intended to be.
- Couples not knowing the Catholic Faith.
- Couples not living the Catholic Faith.
- Contraceptive mentality.
- Dissident theologians and priests who don't accept the Church's teaching on divorce and remarriage.
- Paganization of the Catholic laity.

The meaning of annulment

Annulment declares that a marriage was never made because consent that creates an indissoluble bond between a man and a woman in marriage was never achieved.

Grounds for an annulment

Grounds for an annulment include the following:

- When true consent is lacking (see above for the conditions of true consent).
- The purpose of marriage is purposely excluded.
- Force or fear was present.
- A defect of form occurred (improper ceremony, etc.).

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- No dispensation was obtained for an impediment to marriage.

All marriage tribunals should consider when determining the validity of a marriage is whether or not a couple consented to the minimum requirements necessary to enter into a marriage.

Ways for a couple to best assure a successful marriage and avoid marital breakup

Among the ways that a couple can best assure a successful marriage and avoid marital breakup are as follows:

- Careful selection of mates (personality, background, character, age, religion, social class, ethnicity, etc.)
- Get to know the prospective mate well (no cohabitation)
- Get good premarital counseling
- Long engagement
- Practice patience, humility, chastity, modesty, and other moral virtues
- Prospective partners should know the Faith, including obligations of marriage
- Prospective partners should practice the Faith and strive for holiness
- Prospective partners should possess a culture of life, which excludes a contraceptive mentality.
- Be truly in love (Christian married love), not just romantically in love (equating love with the emotions).

Duties of divorced and remarried Catholics who have living lawful spouses

The Church states that “The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Christ. They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith” (*Catechism*, No. 1665).

Note: The author taught the Sociology of Marriage and the Family for 15 years at the college level, and acquired a lot of knowledge about this subject. I also have taught this subject to high school students at a Catholic high school for an additional 14 years. Time permitting, I hope to expand this section considerably based on my experience.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Our friendship with God began at our Baptism. As our Protestant brothers and sisters would say, this is when we “got right with God.” At Baptism we had the stain of Original Sin washed from our souls and we became temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Christ's Mystical Body, the Catholic Church. Furthermore, we became adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus. Moreover, as his children we became heirs to Heaven. Our Baptism gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and his grace. God dwells in us as long as we remain in his grace, what is called sanctifying grace. Grace is the life of God within us; it is our participation in God's life. We must be in his grace at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can lose God's friendship by committing mortal sin, which is death of the soul; however, we can easily regain his friendship and our places in his family by sorrow for our sins, repentance, and confession.

However, we do not become automatically heirs to Heaven after baptism for we will have to pass the test of our love and devotion to God every day of our lives. The wills of Jesus and the Father are in perfect harmony. We must conform our wills to God's if we expect to remain in his grace. We are all called to be great saints, which means to be holy, to be like Jesus. We become holy only to the extent that we bring our wills into conformance with the divine will. Jesus provides us through his Church the means with which to achieve holiness.

We must spend a lifetime getting to know God better so that we can achieve union with him in this and the next life. We get to know him better and achieve union with him by utilizing the means provided by Jesus. We can achieve holiness and union with God by studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings); by receiving the sacraments frequently (the principal means of his grace); by living virtuous lives (the way to holiness); by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (the way to show our love for him); by engaging in an active prayer life (the way to communicate with him); by penance (the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others); and above all by loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves. God offers each of us sainthood and he provides us with ample grace to achieve this status; however, to achieve sainthood in this life and for all eternity we must cooperate with God's grace. By doing so we will earn a place in the Trinitarian Family forever. He leaves the choice entirely up to us.

Although God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lives in friendship with us from the time of our Baptism, like all friendships, it must be cultivated. We must spend a lifetime developing our friendship with God. The closer our friendship with him, the more he will increasingly make us aware of his presence and the more firm will be our faith in him and his promises.

The virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity were first infused into our souls at Baptism and further augmented at Confirmation. Furthermore, the Cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude were introduced into our souls at Baptism and enhanced at Confirmation to

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supplement the natural virtues that we develop by habitually performing them. Moreover, first at Baptism and then at Confirmation we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit to supplement the infused virtues. All of these contribute to our living virtuous and holy lives.

Our main goal in life should be to achieve and maintain union with God. To achieve union with God requires holiness. We are all called to holiness, to be like Jesus, for he is our model for holiness, because he is holy; therefore, being holy means being like Jesus. The closer we become like Jesus, the more like God we become, the closer to the image of God created in our souls. To be like him we must be perfect as is our heavenly Father. Jesus is like him because he is the Father's son by nature. We become like the Father by becoming his adopted children by grace, by God dwelling in our souls. One must establish and maintain God's friendship in this life if he or she hopes to enjoy his friendship for eternity.

Few become perfect and achieve union with God in this life. Most of us will accomplish this only after we have died and been cleansed in Purgatory, for no unclean thing can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus calls us all to holiness, to sainthood. By doing so we become his brothers and sisters and adopted sons and daughters of his Father; we become members of the Trinitarian Family. Being the Father's sons and daughters makes us heirs to Heaven. Jesus called his heavenly Father "Abba", the Jewish equivalent for "Daddy." As members of God's family we too can truly do as Jesus did, and as he encouraged us to do, call our Heavenly Father "Abba," that is "Daddy."

SECTION III. The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount

By Monsignor Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” Obeying the Ten Commandments and his elaboration on them in the Sermon on the Mount are what is necessary to achieve union with God in this life and Heaven in the next. St. John tells us in his epistle that “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2-3). Jesus tells us during his discourse at the Last Supper that “He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:22). In response to a question by St. Jude that evening, Jesus answered, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

When God dwells in our souls we are in a state of Sanctifying Grace, which is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life: it is our participation in the inner life of the Trinity. To sanctify means to make holy. Only God is Holy, so we become holy only to the extent that God dwells in our souls. Sanctifying grace is that which makes us holy. God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Then we became truly members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus Christ, which make us heirs to Heaven. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity. We can't get to Heaven unless we die in the state of Sanctifying Grace. In other words, to enjoy eternal bliss, God must be dwelling in our souls at our deaths. The only way to stay in the state of grace is to obey God's commandments; to do his will in all things. Jesus encourages us to “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He says the words about the perfection of his Father in Matthew 5:48 at the end of the Sermon on the Mount; therefore, the Sermon is our principal guide to holiness.

The purpose of this essay is to explain the meaning of God's law in general and the Ten Command-



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ments in particular. This should leave us in no doubt what God expects of us in order to remain virtuous and holy. After examining the Commandments, we shall take a look at the Sermon on the Mount, which is an elaboration and clarification of the Ten Commandments and the foundation of Catholic morality. Last, we shall examine some of the basic principles of Catholic morality.

GOD'S LAW

The Eternal Law

The Catholic concept of law begins with the divine or eternal law of God. Fr. John Hardon in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines eternal law as “The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” Germain Grisez, one of the world’s leading moral theologians who teaches at Georgetown University, states regarding the eternal law:



Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must somehow derive from it. People can plan their lives reasonably only because, in one way or another, they share in the universal plan perfectly present in God's eternal law. If they try to follow a plan not somehow derived from eternal law their lives will be unrealistic, as would be the behavior of workers on a large project who departed from the project's master plan in order to follow some other plan.

The Eternal Law is, also known as Divine Providence, which is “God's all-wise plan for the universe.” As Charles Rice, Professor Emeritus of Law at Notre Dame, says in *his 50 Questions on the Natural Law: What It Is and Why We Need It*, the Eternal Law is “The plan of divine

wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” Fr. John Hardon, one of the world’s greatest catechists until his death in 2000, states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that the Eternal Law is “God conceived as the Ruler of the Universe.” He says that “The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law.” To describe what it includes, he says “This eternal law embraces both the physical and moral laws In physical laws, this norm is fulfilled necessarily, as happens with gravity or the expansion of matter by heat. In moral laws, the norm may or may not be fulfilled depending on the free decision of human beings.”

The eternal law includes the laws of nature that govern the universe which is discoverable by

scientists using the scientific method. However, we are here concerned with the moral component of the eternal law. The divine or eternal law can be broken down into either natural or revealed (positive) law. It has been said that the natural moral law is inscribed in the heart, and known by human reason. On the other hand, all positive law is created by a legislator, whether the legislator be God or humans. For example, revealed or divine positive law is posited (or put in place or legislated) by God himself and is found in the Old Testament, especially the Ten Commandments, in the New Testament, which teaches the new law of Jesus Christ, especially as found in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the Church's Tradition. All positive laws created by human legislators should be based on the eternal law and revelation, whether they be the laws that govern the Church (ecclesiastical law) or those that govern civil society.

Law has been defined as “a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority.” God is ultimately the controlling authority of all law. St. Thomas Aquinas distinguished four kinds of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine. One scholar has said of these categories that “Eternal law is the decree of God that governs all creation. Natural law is the human ‘participation’ in the eternal law and is discovered by reason. Natural law, of course, is based on ‘first principles. . . Human law is positive law: the natural law applied by governments to societies. Divine law is the specially revealed law in the scriptures.”

The Natural Law

The natural law flows from the eternal law. In this regard, St Thomas Aquinas said in his famous *Summa Theologica* that the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law.” He said elsewhere that “people are naturally disposed to understand some basic practical principles”, which he calls the “primary principles of natural law. Since everyone knows them naturally, no one can make a mistake about them.” A document of Vatican Council II states, “The Church calls these naturally known principles ‘natural law.’ They are natural in the sense that they are not humanly enacted but are objective principles which originate in human nature” (*Gaudium et Spes* 16; *Dignitatis Humanae* 14). Adrian Calderone, an expert in intellectual property law, says “There is a natural physical law, or scientific law, and a natural moral law.” He defines natural law as “the prescriptions for human conduct derived from reason as applied to the nature of things.” He says “By ‘prescriptions for human conduct’ I mean what we ought to do or not to do. Reason, of course, is a fundamental basis for any law. There’s the old saying that where reason ends, so ends the law. And by the nature of things we mean reality, the way things act by their nature, and that includes human nature. This definition also presupposes some purpose. The Ten Commandments are a concise statement of natural law principles.”

Fr. Hardon says that the natural law is “what God has produced in the world of creation; as coming to human beings, it is what they know (or can know) of what God has created. It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essen-

tials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” He says that we are here dealing with the natural moral law and not the laws of nature that can be explained scientifically, such as the Laws of Gravity. To make his point, Father states, “St. Paul recognizes the existence of a natural law when he describes the moral responsibility of those ancients who did not have the benefit of Mosaic revelation.” He paraphrases St Paul as saying, “Pagans, who never heard of the Law but are led by reason to do what the Law commands, may not actually ‘possess’ the Law, but they can be said to be the Law. They can point to the substance of the Law engraved on their hearts—they can call a witness, that is, their own conscience—they have accusation and defense, that is, their own inner mental dialogue” (See Romans 2:14-15 for the actual citation).

St Paul wrote in Romans 2:14-15 that “When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” He is here, of course, referring to the natural law written on the human heart. Furthermore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites that God’s law is already in their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14) The prophet Jeremiah said regarding the natural law, “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Moreover, St Thomas Aquinas refers several places to the law of God written on the human heart and Pope John Paul quotes St Paul’s Romans text in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* in connection with his discussion of the natural law (No. 46).

The effects of sin on the use of reason: Even though the natural law is “written on our hearts”—which means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them—we do not always interpret the natural order correctly, because of our fallen nature due to Original Sin. When we fail to do so, it causes us and others unhappiness as well as personal and social problems. As consequences of the Fall our intellects have been darkened or diminished, our wills have been weakened, and concupiscence has brought disorder to our passions. As Professor Rice tells us, because of our wounded nature people are inclined to draw “the wrong conclusions in their understanding or application of the secondary principles of the natural law.” For example, people can convince themselves that all kinds of acts are moral, such as lying, stealing, abortion, premarital sex, adultery, gay lesbian relationships, contraception, assisted suicide, infanticide, euthanasia, and many others are perfectly normal acts, at least in certain circumstances, whereas they are, in fact, serious violations of the natural law, which, of course, is based on God’s Eternal Law. Whether or not people recognize it or not, these acts hurt other people and cause human suffering, sorrow, and even death. When we humans violate the natural order of things, we must pay the consequences. One cannot lie, cheat, steal, kill, fornicate, or adulterate without creating problems for himself or herself and others any more than he or she can jump off a tall building and violate the law of gravity. Such violations of the natural order have caused untold damage and misery in our world over the centuries.

God's Law

Law has been defined as “a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority.” God is the ultimate controlling authority of all law. St. Thomas Aquinas distinguished four kinds of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine. One scholar has said of these categories that “Eternal law is the decree of God that governs all creation. Natural law is the human ‘participation’ in the eternal law and is discovered by reason. Natural law, of course, is based on ‘first principles. Human law is positive law: the natural law applied by governments to societies. Divine law is the specially revealed law in the scriptures.”

Eternal Law

The eternal law has been defined as, “The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” One of the world's leading moral theologians, states that, “Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must some-how derive from it. Another prominent theologian says that, “The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law.” The Eternal Law is, also known as Divine Providence, which is “God's all-wise plan for the universe...This eternal law embraces both the physical and

Natural Law

St Thomas Aquinas said in his famous Summa Theologica that the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law.” There is a natural physical law, or scientific law, and a natural moral law. He defines natural law as “the prescriptions for human conduct derived from reason as applied to the nature of things.” It is therefore called natural law because every-one is subject to it from birth (natio), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” St. Paul tells us, the natural law is “The law of God written on our hearts.” This means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them. Due to the fact that fallen human beings do not always properly interpret the natural law, God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The natural law has been written in the Ten Commandments, for they are simply the codification of the natural law. Jesus further refined and perfected the Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospel. God gave us the Commandments for our own good, because when we break them we cause ourselves and others harm and unhappiness. Just as one can't defy the laws of gravity by jumping off of the Empire State Building without harming himself, we can't break the Commandments without harming ourselves and others. God wants us to love all human beings, including ourselves, as he loves us, because he created us in his very image and likeness and loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for us. All personal and social morality is based on this concept. The natural law is mediated through our conscience.

Positive Law

There exist two types of positive law: Divine Positive Law and Human Positive Law. It's called positive law, because God or humans posit, promulgate, legislate, or makes known these laws themselves.

Divine Positive Law

Divine positive law is God's law revealed in the Bible and Tradition and interpreted by the magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. God has spoken to men in two ways, through Scripture and through Tradition. The Council of Trent stated that, “both founts of revelation, Scripture and Tradition, are to be esteemed equally.” The Bible is the ultimate source of divine revelation. The foundation of divine positive law includes the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. The Catechism defines Holy Scripture as; “the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God, which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Tradition includes not only Holy Scripture, but also ancient creeds and catechisms such as the Didache, ancient liturgies, the writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and Church ecumenical councils, especially those of the Church's formative years.

Human Positive Law

Human positive law is posited or legislated by human beings. It is of two types: Civil Law and Ecclesiastical or Church Law. These are the human laws posited, promulgated, or legislated by the civil society of the State and the ecclesiastical society of the Church.

Civil Law

Civil law is legislation posited or promulgated by the government in a political society. It is legislated by the state to serve the common good and must flow from the natural law to be legitimate. They are not obligatory when the laws are unjust, notably when they are contrary to the laws of God and of the Church, when they do not proceed from legitimate authority, when they are not directed to the common welfare, and when they violate distributive justice.”

Church Law

An ordinance issued by legitimate authority in the Catholic Church. The legislators for the entire Church are the Roman Pontiff alone, or the Pope through the Roman Curia, or an ecumenical council together with the Pope; the bishops for their individual dioceses, or conferences of bishops for the territories under their jurisdiction; and the major superiors of institutes of perfection for their members, according to the respective constitutions.”

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Germain Grisez says of this matter, “Although we are naturally disposed to know basic practical principles and can make no mistake about them, they are not by them-selves sufficient for the judgment of conscience which we must make. Our ultimate end is to share in fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, and we do not judge rightly what to do unless we judge in light of this end. So we must supplement natural law with faith, by this means drawing on the eternal law in a way that goes beyond reason.”

The Ten Commandments make the natural law explicit: Due to the fact that fallen human beings do not always properly interpret the natural law, God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The natural law has been written in the Ten Commandments, for they are simply the codification of the natural law. In other words, The Ten Commandments are the natural law put in writing. Jesus further refined and perfected the Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospel. God gave us the Commandments for our own good, because when we break them we cause ourselves and others harm and unhappiness. Just as we can't defy the laws of gravity by jumping off of the Empire State Building without harming ourselves, we can't break the Commandments without harming ourselves and others. God wants us to love all human beings, including ourselves, as he loves us, because he created us in his very image and likeness and loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for us. All personal and social morality is based on this concept.

The natural law is mediated through our conscience: The natural law is binding on our consciences: Vatican II teaches us that "human persons find in their conscience a law they do not impose on themselves which demands their obedience: 'For man has in his heart a law written by God . . . This law not only calls the person to do good and avoid evil, but it also when necessary speaks 'to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that" (*Gaudium et Spes* 16; see 3-B). Another council document says of the subject: “The Council makes its own the explanation of St. Thomas, that this natural law is the human participation in the eternal law . . . the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective, and universal—whereby God orders, directs, and governs the whole world and the ways of the human community according to the plan of his wisdom and love. God makes man a sharer in this his law, so that, by divine providence's sweet disposing, man can recognize more and more the unchanging truth” (*Dignitatis Humanae* 3). Since the natural law originates in human nature itself, it is binding on all human beings of all times and places, of all races and ethnic origins, and of all religions.

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a prominent theologian of spirituality and renowned spiritual director until his death a few years ago, tells us in his book *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of “oughtness” that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying:

As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a

kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both . . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it.” [Lewis goes on to say], lying is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act . . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person.

I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural. In fact, the existence of the human conscience has been one of many proofs given for God's existence. People who are in error in their perception of the natural law may reduce or eliminate their subjective culpability or guilt, but whether or not such people are culpable or held accountable for their unnatural or disordered acts, some acts are always objectively wrong. Because one is ignorant of the fact that certain acts are objectively wrong doesn't make them right.

The content of natural law: In this regard, Professor Rice quotes St. Thomas as saying, “all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance.” Rice identifies the basic inclinations of man as follows:

1. To seek the good, including his highest good, which is eternal happiness with God.
2. To preserve himself in existence.
3. To preserve the species.
4. To live in community with other men.
5. To use his intellect and will—that is, to know the truth and to make his own decisions.

These are inclinations or instincts that are part of our nature; we were created with them. Professor Rice states that “These inclinations are put into human nature by God to help man achieve his final end of eternal happiness. From these inclinations we apply the natural law by deduction: Good should be done; this action is good; this action therefore should be done.” I've always looked upon the inclination or ability of humans to know and understand the natural law as an innate ability in human nature. God created us with the ability to use our reason to instinctively know that some acts benefit ourselves and others and that other acts hurt us and them in some way. We know this, in part at least, because we see that some acts contribute to our happiness and the well-being of others and some acts cause us and them suffering, sorrow, and even death.

Positive Law

Because of their fallen nature, humans are severely limited in their ability to properly interpret

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the natural law. This means, of course, that God had to reveal his law to them so as to leave no question how he intended for them to act for their own good. In this regard, the *Catechism* states, “The precepts of natural law are not perceived by everyone clearly and immediately. In the present situation, sinful man needs grace and revelation so moral and religious truths may be known . . .” (No. 1960). There exist two types of positive law: Divine Positive Law and Human Positive Law. It’s called positive law, because God or humans posit, promulgate, legislate, or makes known these laws themselves.

Divine positive law: Divine positive law is God’s law revealed in the Bible and Tradition and interpreted by the magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. The foundation of divine positive law includes the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. Fr. Hardon states regarding this matter, “human beings come to know the eternal law from divine revelation to which they can respond with the help of God's grace. This is the revealed law that spans the whole ambit of God's special communication of his will ‘through the prophets’ in times past and in our own time through His Son” (Hebrews 1:1).

Human positive law: Also there is another type of posited law known as human law, because it is posited or legislated by human beings. Human posited law is of two types: Civil Law and Ecclesiastical or Church Law. These are the human laws posited, promulgated, or legislated by the civil society of the State and the ecclesiastical society of the Church. Human positive or civil law (law legislated by the state to serve the common good) must flow from the natural law to be legitimate.

God's law can only be effectively realized in human societies. Quoting a document of Vatican Council II, the *Catechism* goes on to say, “The political community and public authority are based on human nature and therefore . . . belong to an order established by God” (No. 1920; *Gaudium et Spes* 74 § 3). In order for authority to be legitimate, it must be exercised in a manner that contributes to the common good and must employ morally acceptable means to achieve its ends (No. 1921). The “common good” is defined as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (No. 1924, *Gaudium et Spes* § 1). The *Catechism* tells us that “The common good consists of three essential elements: respect for and promotion of the fundamental rights of the person; prosperity, or the development of the spiritual and temporal goods of society; the peace and security of the group and of its members” (No.1925).

- **Civil Law:** Civil law is legislation promulgated by the government in a political society. Generally it is binding in conscience, but only laws that are consistent with the higher eternal, natural, or divine law are binding. Human positive or civil law (law legislated by the state to serve the common good) must flow from the natural law to be legitimate. In this regard, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quoting St. Paul states: “There is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God” (No. 1918; Romans 13:1). One of the problems with the founding of the United States is that ultimate authority is believed to derive from the people and not from God. This has

led to the passing of laws inconsistent with God's law. If human laws fail to be consistent with the natural law, they are no laws at all. For example, laws that sanction abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, or same sex “marriage” are against God's law, and as a consequence are not valid laws, no matter what the state says. To quote Fr. Hardon on this subject, civil laws “are certainly not obligatory when the laws are unjust, notably when they are contrary to the laws of God and of the Church, when they do not proceed from legitimate authority, when they are not directed to the common welfare, and when they violate distributive justice.” He goes on to say, “Thus a person is not permitted to obey a law that commands acts against the moral law.” However, he says that “once a law has been passed by the civil government, it should be considered just unless the contrary is clear from the nature of the law or from the declaration of ecclesiastical authority.”

- **Ecclesiastical Law:** Fr. Hardon states that Ecclesiastical Law is “An ordinance issued by legitimate authority in the Catholic Church. The legislators for the entire Church are the Roman Pontiff alone, or the Pope through the Roman Curia, or an ecumenical council together with the Pope; the bishops for their individual dioceses, or conferences of bishops for the territories under their jurisdiction; and the major superiors of institutes of perfection for their members, according to the respective constitutions.”

From the outset, the Church has maintained that it has a right to pass laws that are binding on the consciences of the faithful. Fr. Hardon states that this right is believed to be of divine origin and quotes Pope Benedict XV's 1917 encyclical *Providentissima Mater Ecclesia* to demonstrate this. The Pope wrote regarding Church Law that, “the Church, our most prudent Mother, by the constitution received from her Founder, Christ, was endowed with all the qualities suitable to a perfect society. So, too, from her very beginning, since she was to obey the Lord's command to teach and govern all nations, she has undertaken to regulate and protect by the laws the discipline of clergy and laity alike.”

Who is bound by Church Law? Generally, Ecclesiastical Law applies only to members of the Church. The 1911 Edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* states that “Canon law is the body of laws and regulations made by or adopted by ecclesiastical authority, for the government of the Christian organization and its members.” Keep in mind that we are not here talking about the moral law, which is directly based on the God's Higher Law to which all persons are subject, but to laws that apply only to the governance of the Church. Fr. Hardon tells us that “Every baptized person, even if one is not a professed Catholic, is subject to ecclesiastical laws except in such cases as are indicated in the law. The obligation stems from the fact that by the sacrament of baptism ‘we are made members of Christ and of his body, the Church’. Baptism is, in fact . . . the door of the Church. Since the baptismal character is indelible, a person once baptized always remains subject to the Church into which he or she was incorporated by this sacrament of water and the Holy Spirit.”

The content of Church Law: The main body of Church Law is the Canon law, which is in the words of one source “a fully developed legal system, with all the necessary elements: courts,

lawyers, judges, a fully articulated legal code and principles of legal interpretation.” For centuries, Church Law consisted of a huge growing body of decrees issued by Popes, bishops, councils, and the like, but the bishops attending the First Vatican Council in 1870 requested that these be organized into a single code. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Pope Pius X “ordered that work begin on reducing these diverse documents into a single code, presenting the normative portion in the form of systematic short canons shorn of the preliminary considerations (“Whereas . . .” etc.) and omitting those parts that had been superseded by later developments.” The code was promulgated in 1917 as the *Code of Canon Law* and went into effect the following year, consequently, it is known as the Code of 1918. For the most part, the Code applies only to the Latin Church except when “it treats of things that, by their nature, apply to the Oriental, such as the effects of baptism” (canon 87). The Code was revised and updated after the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1965. It took commissions almost two decades of study and discussion before the revised edition could be promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1983; therefore, this edition is known as the *1983 Code of Canon Law*

In summary, because humans suffer from the effects of Original Sin, they often have not correctly interpreted the natural law. This is the reason God had to reveal his law to the human race in the form of written commandments. The Ten Commandments are the main demands that God makes on our obedience to his will. They are nothing more than the codification of the Law of God written on our hearts, the Natural Law. He first gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai, and then, "Jesus Christ confirmed and completed them in his Sermon on the Mount." He not only kept them in his Sermon on the Mount, but he deepened, perfected, and elevated them far beyond what had been required in the Law of the Old Testament. These are the foundation of God's law.

The Ten Commandments

Because humans suffer from the effects of Original Sin, they all too often have not correctly interpreted the natural law. This is the reason God had to reveal his law to the human race in the form of written commandments. The Ten Commandments are the main demands that God makes on our obedience to his will. They are nothing more than the codification of the Law of God written on our hearts, the Natural Law. He first gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai, and then Jesus Christ confirmed and completed them in his Sermon on the Mount. He not only main-



tained them in his Sermon on the Mount, but he deepened, elevated, and perfected them far beyond what had been required in the Law of the Old Testament.

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The Ten Commandments are also called the Decalogue, from the Greek *deka*, meaning ten, and *logos*, meaning word. So literally the term means the “Ten Words” of God. They are found in the Torah, the Jewish Law found in the first five books of the Bible, and are a summary of the moral law, which was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17). They were twice written on stone: the first tables were broken by Moses when he saw the idolatry of the Israelites when he returned from being gone forty days on top of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:19) and the second tables were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which was a special wooden box covered with ornamental gold sheets, and kept in a portable shrine of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:18). The Tabernacle, which was a tent like structure, contained two rooms: the outer room called the Holy Room was essentially a sacristy for the Jewish priests and the Holy of Holies where the Ark was kept. The Israelites believed that God reigned over from his seat located on top of the Ark between two Golden Cherubim (angels) statues. The Ark was later placed in the Holy of Holies in King Solomon's Temple, but disappeared after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 586 B.C.

Even though the Ten Commandments were given by God in the Old Testament, they remained the foundation on which Christian morality is based, because they were explicitly ratified by Christ and his Apostles (Matthew 5:19; Romans 13:8-10). Moreover, they simply put into writing the law naturally known to all men by reason—the natural law; consequently, everyone, not only Christians, are obliged to obey the Ten Commandments. Fr. Hardon tells us “[T]he Decalogue is immense, it embraces, literally all the religious and moral responsibilities of the human race.”

There are two versions of the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-18. They are the heart of God's covenant with his chosen people, which was extended to include the entire human race under the New Covenant. The Ten Commandments was the heart of the Old Covenant (Testament) between God and the Israelites and were ratified by the sacrifice of animals, whereas the Sermon on the Mount—which fulfills the Commandments—is the heart of the New and Everlasting Covenant (Testament) between God and his Church and was ratified by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross at Calvary.

God gave us his commandments for our good. Breaking them harms us and others by causing unhappiness, sorrow, suffering, and even death. God gave us the commandments to help us control our appetites and passions for our good and the good of others. He is not a killjoy or spoilsport who does not want us to have any fun, for after all, he gave us our appetites and passions for a reason. Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy in order to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin. When we sin, we abuse them rather than use them for God's glory and the benefit of ourselves and others. To abuse the appetite for food and drink—which is gluttony—or the appetite to procreate—which is lust—harms us and others.

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The Ten Commandments have always held a central place in the Catholic Church. St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure declared that the Ten Commandments are really the Natural Law, the Law of God written on the hearts of men. This means that the precepts of the Decalogue can be known by the light of reason without revelation; humans just instinctively know that some things are wrong, because they cause damage to the individual, the family, the community, and even the entire human race.

In summary, the Ten Commandments are the main demands that God makes on our obedience to his will. They are nothing more than the codification of the Law he has written on our hearts, which is called the Natural Law. He first gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai, and then Jesus Christ confirmed and completed them in the Sermon on the Mount. He not only kept them in his Sermon, but he deepened and elevated them far beyond what had been required in the Law of the Old Testament.

The Ten Commandments have been called the commandments of love, because Jesus reduced them to two: love of God and love of neighbor. The first table of three commandments apply to loving and worshipping God and the second table of seven apply to loving our neighbor. This is reflected in the beginning of the great Shema of the Israelites found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." When one of the scribes asked Jesus, "'Which commandment is the first of all?' In response he repeated the Shema: "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." In response the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Jesus responded by saying that he answered wisely and that "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Mark 12:28-34). This is the heart of all morality. We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, for didn't Jesus say, "If you love me, obey my commandments" (John 14:15).

Although these and other acts are forbidden, we should not look at them in a negative manner, but in the spirit in which they are intended. We should refrain from doing them not because of the punishments due for their violation, but out of love of God and neighbor. Keep in mind that they are for our good.

I. The First Commandment

I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.

The First Commandment commands that we be religious, that is, that we believe in God and to love him, to adore him, and to serve him as the one true God, the Creator and Lord of all things. Fr. Hardon says that “Adoration is the recognition with our minds of who God is and the response with our wills to this recognition.” Not only are we obligated by the First Commandment to know who God is but we are required to strive to know him better all the days of our lives by prayer, a frequent reception of the sacraments, meditation on the truths of the Faith, acts of penance and alms giving, and the practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Father further informs us that “We must adore God because He is the origin of our being from whom we came. Secondly, we must adore God because He is the purpose, He is the purpose of our being for whom we are made.” In other words, “We are to adore Him as our creator and we are to adore Him as our destiny.” How are we to adore God? Father says that “we are adoring God by our humility in the measure in which we submit our wills.” We adore him to the extent we obey his commandments. When Jesus taught us to pray, he said “Thy will be done”, not “my will be done.” And we must always keep in mind that the Commandments are just that, “commandments”, not “suggestions”.



While Moses was on top of the mountain receiving instructions on how to build an Ark and Tabernacle from God and other instructions, the people got impatient. In fact they got so impatient and tired of waiting that when Moses was in communion with God for forty days on the top of Mt. Sinai, they pressured Moses' brother Aaron, who was in charge in his absence, to allow them to build a Golden Calf to worship out of the golden earrings of the people. Aaron also had an altar built before the calf and allowed the Israelites to make offerings with which to worship. The Israelites were severely punished for their infidelity.

Fr. Hardon tells us that the First Commandment is not only chronologically or even logically the first, but theologically the first, because it synthesizes all ten. He tells us that the first commandment focuses on three aspects: adoration, prayer, and sacrifice.

The meaning of Adoration: Fr. Hardon defines adoration as “the recognition with our minds of who God is and the response with our wills to this recognition.” In other words, adoration is recognizing who God is, that is he is real to us. He states “Recognizing God as realizing God means that He is no mere construct of my intellect or conclusion of my reason. He is a reality Indeed, He is the first and primary, and necessary reality, without whom and except for whom, nothing else would exist.” Reality means truth, and respect to God it means he exists, he is real. Not only do we realize that God exists, we realize who he is. Father says “I realize not only that God is, I realize who God is. This is our principle task in life, to grow in our realization of who is God. Everything else, what a mild and cheap adjective, is secondary.” Therefore, we should not only know about God, but also to know him. Countless scholars over the centuries, and especially in

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our own day, have known or know a lot about God, but they didn't or don't today know and love him.

Fr. Hardon asked: So, who is God? He answers, God is the necessary being. Nothing else, nothing else need exist, only God must exist (See *Reasons to Believe: Natural Theology* for a discussion of Necessary Being as a proof for God's existence.). If there ever was a time there was nothing, nothing would exist now. Something had to be there to create the whole process of existence in the first place, and that something is God, the Necessary Being. All else is contingent or created being. Fr. Hardon states in this regard:

God is perfect being. He not only is intelligent. He not only is loving. He not only is powerful. God is love. God is wisdom. God is omnipotence. In a word, God is the Creator of all things that except for Him would not even exist. Except for God you'd be the empty pews and I would be the empty chair.

However, knowing who God is and even knowing him personally is not enough to fulfil the First Commandment; we must "respond with our wills to what our minds tell us is true. Regarding this matter, Fr. Hardon asserts:

It is the duty to respond to what we believe. We believe with the mind. In fact we can say this is the main reason why we have a free will. We've got to have a mind, otherwise the will would not know what to choose. But why do we have a will? We have a will most fundamentally that we might freely choose to so direct our lives that everything we think, everything we desire, everything we do is to be an expression of our adoration of God.

Why we must adore God: Fr. Hardon informs us that there are two fundamental reasons why we must adore God. First we must adore God because he is the origin of our being. And second, we must adore God because he is the purpose of our being for whom we are made. Father states:

First then, we must adore God because He is the origin of our existence. Therefore, we owe God the adoration of the total submission to His divine will. As St. Paul observes, can the clay possibly tell the potter what it is to do with the clay? We are the clay . . . we are total, utter, abysmal, dependent on God. He is our Lord. We are His servants. He is master, we must obey Him. And this is the primary stress of adoration in the Old Testament. If there is one thing that the Old Law brings out, with clear and unqualifying certitude, it is that either we obey God by submitting to His will or He will exercise His will against our will. And that is why in the Old Testament, there's one book after another telling us of how God responds to those who refuse to recognize him as their master and Lord. In one simple and declarative sentence, He causes them pain. That's why, and not coincidentally, there's pain in the world Because those human beings who have been created by God, and owe him total submission refuse to obey. All the pain in the world, all of it, is the result of sin. And what is sin except for the refusal of a creature . . . to submit to its creator.

In other words, we must adore God, because he is our creator and Lord and has a divine right to

our constant and total submission to his divine will. Moreover, we must adore God not only because he has created us, but also because he made us for himself; he is our destiny. As St. Augustine said in his *Confessions*; “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” The goal of our existence is to return to the God who created us for himself.

The principal goal of our existence won't be realized unless we obey God's commandments by doing his will. Fr. Hardon tells us that the New Testament does not exclude the adoration of submission of a created will to the will of the creator. He says that Jesus couldn't have been more explicit that those who refused to submit to the will of the Father would risk eternal punishment in Hell. However, the greatest motive for adoring God is not the imperfect reason of having fear of eternal damnation for failing to do so, but the perfect reason of loving God for his own sake by doing so. With respect to this, he says, “[W]e grow in the love of God and do His will not because we are afraid of His consequences but because we love the one who tells us that we are to show our love for Him in return for His unspeakable love for us.”

How we are to adore God: Fr. Hardon says we are to adore God in the two ways in which he is adorable. “We are to adore him as our creator and we are to adore Him as our destiny.” In regard to adoring him as our creator, he says that we must be “constantly, and totally, and utterly dependent on God for everything, everything we are, everything we do, and everything we hope to be, and everything we hope to achieve.” He says that what follows from this primary type of adoration is the adoration of humility. He states:

We are doing God's will in the measure that we submit our wills to His. God exercises His freedom. His freedom to bring us out of nothing into being. And has given us a free will in this fundamental reason. That recognizing who He is on whom everything we have, everything we hope to have, and everything we are and hope to be totally and utterly depends. In other words, it is sheerest sanity to adore God. And is insanity to not recognize that except for God we wouldn't exist and therefore should respond accordingly.

Humility is the submission of the created will to the uncreated will of God. St. Augustine said something to the effect that sin is a condition whereby one's will is contrary to God's will. Pride is the contrary to God's will, because the person guilty of pride says “my will be done”, instead of “Thy (God's) will be done”. Pride was the sin of Adam and Eve, which gave rise to the saying, “Pride cometh before a fall.” Every time we sin— i.e., do something contrary to God's will— we are saying “My will be done”, not “Thy will be done”.. How are we to adore God as our destiny? In regard to this, Fr. Hardon tells us:

[W]e are to admire him by our selfless, total, complete love. This is different from more than the adoration of humility. This is the adoration of charity. By our humility we surrender everything created to the Almighty will of God. By our charity we aspire to our union with God . . . Thus we can, and indeed we must say that the New Testament commandment tells us that we shall love Jesus Christ with our whole heart, our whole soul with our whole strength and then Christ added with your whole mind . . . Adoration is

the humble surrender of everything in my life to Jesus Christ, my God. To be governed uniquely by His divine will Adoration is the loving surrender of myself . . . to Jesus Christ.

Acts forbidden by the First Commandment

Now that we have discussed what adoration entails, let's look at a more detailed list of actual violations of failing to do so in accordance with the requirement of the First Commandment. The First Commandment forbids impiety, superstition and irreligious behavior, apostasy, heresy, voluntary doubt, and culpable (one should know better) ignorance of the truths of faith. The following is a list of sins against the First Commandment compiled by a holy priest. Acts forbidden by the First Commandment include:

Sins against Faith

1. To be ignorant of the principal mysteries of Christianity; of the Creed, of the Commandments of God and his Church, or of the Sacraments.
2. To give God's honor to any created being or thing whatsoever; to pay divine worship, or to ascribe God's exclusive powers or attributes, to any being except God himself.
3. Willfully to doubt, or obstinately to err, in any point of faith, out of human respect, interest, fear etc.
4. To favor heretics or wicked men, in supporting or approving their opinions or actions.
5. To endanger our faith by reading their books with pleasure.
6. To examine divine mysteries with curiosity, and secrets of Providence by pure human reason.
7. To condemn or deride holy things.
8. To abuse the words of the Holy Scripture, by perverting them to a wicked or profane sense, making them subservient to jokes, or other ill purposes.
9. To desire to know things to come, which belong to God alone, or things past or present, which are hid from us, and for this end to employ unlawful means, as fortune tellers, or other superstitious inventions.
10. To give credit to dreams, or make superstitious observations; to employ prayers or sacred names to ill uses; to use charms etc.
11. An Involvement in occult practices, e.g., witchcraft, ouija boards, seances, palm reading, tarot cards, hypnotism, divination, astrology, black magic, sorcery, etc.
12. An Involvement in or adherence to New Age or Eastern philosophies, atheism or agnosticism.
13. Apostasy (leaving the Church).
14. Adherence to a schismatic group.
15. Putting faith in superstition, e.g., horoscopes, good luck charms, etc.
16. Joining the Masons or other secret society.

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17. Receiving Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin.
18. Receiving the Sacraments of Confirmation or Matrimony while in the state of mortal sin.
19. Being married by a Justice of the Peace or by a minister of another denomination (without dispensation).
20. Involvement in false or pagan worship.
21. Willfully denying the Faith of the Catholic Church.
22. Despair of God's grace or mercy.
23. Presumption (committing a mortal sin with the idea that you can just go to confession).
24. Hatred of God.
25. Simony (buying or selling spiritual things).
26. Failure to receive Holy Communion at least once per year (if possible, during the Easter Season).
27. Desecration of the Holy Eucharist.

Sins against Hope

1. By distrusting the mercies of God, and despairing of the pardon of our sins.
2. By presuming on God's goodness, without the least concern of amendment.
3. By deferring our conversion or repentance till the end of life.
4. By exposing ourselves to the danger of offending God either by company, reading, or otherwise, which is called tempting God.
5. By exposing ourselves, without necessity, to some corporal danger; as sickness, wounds or death.
6. By neglecting the remedies which God has appointed in these dangers, as physic for the body, or prayer and the sacraments for the soul.

Sins against Charity

1. By not loving God above all things, but rather choosing willfully to offend him, than suffer any loss of honor, riches, etc.
2. By preferring the love of man before the love of God; or offending him through fear of being jeered or slighted.
3. By omitting our duty through shame, or human respect.
4. By thinking seldom of God, or being ashamed to speak of him; or by not hearkening to his inspirations, by forgetting his benefits, or neglecting to give him thanks.

Sins against Religion

1. By not adoring God, or praying to him but seldom.
2. By praying without attention, and with willful distractions.

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3. By a want of respect to God in time of prayer; or by talking or being present in holy places without a becoming modesty and gravity in our looks, words and actions.

Sins against the Care we ought to have of our Salvation

1. By a love of idleness.
2. By being too solicitous in temporal concerns, and neglecting the means of salvation.
3. By deferring amendment of life, or immediately desisting, after having begun it.
4. By neglecting the means of salvation; as the sacraments, prayer, good works, or performing them without devotion.

II. The Second Commandment

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

We address God in prayer: In both Exodus and Deuteronomy, the wording of the Second Commandment is the same (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11). The Second Commandment prescribes the respectful use of God's name and forbids using the Divine Name irreverently. Fr. Hardon says this implies the duty to profess by verbal communication our belief in the one true God. God's name should be invoked in prayer, which is speech addressed to him. Fr. Hardon explains:

Because of the social character of ancient Israel, vocal prayers and hymns in common were of primary importance. The books of the Old Testament are filled with such forms of communication with Yahweh. The Psalms alone are one hundred and fifty religious lyrics that have also become part of the Christian liturgy. As we enter the New Testament, we find Christ urging His followers to pray, not only privately but together. At the same time, He was very critical of some practices of prayer among the Pharisees. He denounced their hypocrisy, describing them as "devouring the houses of widows while they make long prayers in public" (Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47). When Jesus was asked by His disciples to teach them how to pray, He gave them the Our Father.

He continues: "Following the custom of the Israelites, the early Christians sang ritual hymns in their public assemblies (Acts 16:25). In this they were putting into practice what St. Paul told the Ephesians: "Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, so that always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God who is our Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19).

Fr. Hardon reminds us that although the Church has always encouraged us to use vocal prayers, it wants us to be aware of what we are saying or singing. He says "It is one thing to pronounce the words; it is something else to unite oneself in mind and heart with God whom we are addressing. There is such a thing as culpable inattention in vocal prayer, and therefore a sin against the Second Commandment." St Teresa of Avila admonished us to say our prayers with attention and devotion, meaning that we should pay attention to what we are saying when we speak to God, and mean what we say.

Oaths and Vows: The Second Commandment also includes the making of oaths and vows.



The IHS Christian Emblem is a Monogram which represents the Holy Name of Jesus consisting of the three letters: IHS. During the Middle Ages, the Name of Jesus was written: IHESUS. The I.H.S. Christian Emblem is an acronym of the Latin: *Jesus Hominum Salvator* which translates as Jesus, Saviour of man.

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Defining the meaning of oaths, Fr. Hardon states:

An oath is the invocation of God's name to bear witness to the truth of what someone is saying. The oath may be either assertive or promissory. It is assertive when the Divine Name is called upon in testimony of the truth of some past or present fact or event, for example, that a crime was not committed. The oath is promissory when a person calls upon God to testify that a promise made will be kept.

He informs us that "In the Old Testament, oaths were to be made by Yahweh alone. They were, in effect, a profession of faith in the divinity of the one invoked. Therefore, to swear by other gods was a denial of the exclusive divinity of the one true God." The making of an oath was considered so important that the prophet Jeremiah established the norms for a proper oath. He asserted that "If you swear, 'As Yahweh lives!' truthfully, justly, honestly, the nations will bless themselves by you" (Jeremiah 4:2). Fr. Hardon emphasizes that an oath "must be in witness of the truth; otherwise it becomes perjury. It must be taken prudently; otherwise it becomes a desecration of God's majesty. It must be expressed honestly, which means that an oath may not be taken to witness to something sinful."

On the other hand, a vow differs from a promissory oath in that one makes a promise to God to do something. Vows are often mentioned in the Old Testament and go back to the earliest history of Israel. Jacob made a vow to worship at Bethel (Genesis 28:20); Hannah made a vow in order to obtain a son (I Samuel 1:11); David vowed to provide a dwelling for the Ark (Psalm 132:2). There are frequent references in the Old Law to the duty of keeping a vow (Psalm 22:26, 50:14; Job 22:27; Isaiah 19:21). In the New Testament, there are two explicit references to vows (Acts 18:18, 21:23-24). Moreover, we know from tradition that Christians took vows already in the apostolic age.

The Church teaches that a vow is a free and deliberate promise made to God to do something that is morally good and more pleasing to God than its omission. Fr. Hardon says that it is always understood that a person would commit a sin by violating the promise, and that "vows are pleasing to God because in taking them a person goes beyond the call of duty to be generous with God." He states:

Vows are praiseworthy because they unite the one taking the vow by a new bond with God. Actions performed under vow become also acts of religion. Vows give to God not only a single morally good action; they dedicate a person's will to the Almighty. Vows also forestall human weakness by meriting special grace from God to perform actions that might otherwise be humanly impossible.

Blasphemy and Cursing: Fr. Hardon defines blasphemy in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as:

Speaking against God in a contemptuous, scornful, or abusive manner. Included under blasphemy are offenses committed by thought, word, or action. Serious contemptuous ridicule of the saints, sacred objects, or of persons consecrated to God is also blasphemous

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because God is indirectly attacked. Blasphemy is a grave violation of charity toward God. Its gravity may be judged by the capital punishment on the Old Testament, severe penalties of the Church, and in many cases also of the State for blasphemous speech or conduct. In order for a person to sin gravely in this manner, he must use blasphemous expressions and realize the contemptuous meaning of what he says or does.

Blasphemy is every form of speaking against God in a scornful or abusive way. Fr. Hardon tells us that blasphemy need not be expressed in speech, that it can be purely internal in thought or desire. And to make things even worse, “it can become externally manifest in actions that are blasphemous twice over: once because of the internal contempt for God which inspires the action, and once again because the blasphemer goes so far as to profess his opposition to God so that others are scandalized by the blasphemy.” Any thought or desire, word or action that is scornful of the three persons of God is blasphemous.

Fr. Hardon tells us that there is a difference between conscious and deliberate blasphemy and blasphemy that arises from emotion or ignorance. The degree of guilt of blasphemy must be judged in accordance with a person’s responsibility for his ignorance or emotional condition. Nonetheless, we don’t get off easily. He states:

One thing, however, is certain. Our knowledge of God is a duty, and control of our emotions is an obligation of the moral law. We should know who God is, that He deserves our total reverence of His name, and we have a free will that, with God’s grace, is to master our feelings. Most cases of blasphemy arise under pressure of the emotions, especially resentment against God because of the suffering that human beings have to endure. The secret is to develop such a strong faith that even the hardest trials of life will be seen as visitations of a loving God.

Fr. Hardon defines cursing in *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

To call down evil on someone or something. To curse God or holy things or persons is a form of blasphemy. To curse rational creatures is a grave offense against justice and charity. To curse irrational creatures, such as the weather or animals, is normally a venial sin of impatience. To curse the evil spirit as the enemy of God and human beings is lawful, but exclamations that in themselves are not sinful may become unlawful for other reasons, such as the danger of scandal.

To put in different words, cursing is the sin of calling on God to inflict some evil or injury on someone. Fr. Hardon says that “cursing is a form of blasphemy. Every curse arises from hatred of another person, to the point of wanting that person to suffer at the hands of God.” He says:

The malice of cursing is twofold. It is a grave sin against charity. To love someone is to wish well for that person. To curse someone is to wish evil for that person. But cursing is also sinful because it invokes the name of a loving God to ask that someone be harmed. Cursing, therefore, is not only a failure in love. It is hatred put into practice, and asks God to confirm

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this hatred by injuring the one who is hated. The devil hates human beings because he envies their prospect of heaven. Those who curse others are imitating the evil spirit.

The Second Commandment requires that we always maintain a reverence for the Name of God and to fulfill the vows and promises to which we have bound ourselves. The Second Commandment forbids us to dishonor the Name of God: that is, to use his name without respect; to blaspheme God, the most holy Virgin, the saints, or holy things; and to swear oaths that are false, not necessary, or wrong in any way.

Acts forbidden by the Second Commandments

1. By taking the name of God in vain (without good purpose or meaning).
2. By swearing to what one knows or doubts to be false.
3. By swearing to what is unjust, or prejudicial to others.
4. By swearing without necessity, though the thing itself be true and just.
5. By blaspheming God or holy things.
6. By cursing one's self or others, or taking pleasure in hearing others swear or curse; or by provoking them to it.
7. By not censoring them when one could and ought.
8. By making a vow to do what is impossible to fulfill; or to do what is evil and displeasing to God; or to do what one never intends to perform.
9. By breaking lawful vows, or deferring to fulfill them without just cause.
10. Using God's name intentionally as a curse; that is, wishing harm to others.
11. Seriously wishing evil upon another.
12. Serious slander (telling lies) or insult of a sacred person or object.
13. Making an oath in a secret society.
14. Telling a lie or withholding a serious sin in confession.
15. Blasphemy (words of hatred, reproach or defiance toward God; speaking ill of God).
16. Perjury (lying under oath).
17. Swearing false oaths.

III. The Third Commandment

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

The Third Commandment orders us to honor God on Sunday's and holy days by acts of external worship and for Catholics the most important of these is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Over the centuries, Sunday became established as the principal feast day of the week for the faithful. Three reasons were given:



1. It is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world (St. Justin Martyr, 165 A.D.).
2. It is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead (St. Justin).
3. It is the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost, in the form of tongues of fire (St. Isidore of Seville, 636 A.D.).

John Paul II's apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (The Day of the Lord). In this document he says, "The Lord's Day, on which the Paschal Mystery is celebrated, is by apostolic tradition to be observed in the universal Church as the primary holy day of obligation. On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass.

Church Rules Governing Church Attendance: Many Catholics have come to believe that Mass attendance is no longer obligatory, but this is simply not the case. We can find information several places that outline our Sunday obligation.

- **The Holy Bible:** First and foremost the Holy Bible says that we must attend Church on Sunday. The Third Commandments tells us to "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day." The 1911 Edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says of the Ten Commandments, "The Ten Commandments are precepts bearing on the fundamental obligations of religion and morality and embodying the revealed expression of the Creator's will in relation to man's whole duty to God and to his fellow-creatures. They are found twice recorded in the Pentateuch, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, but are given in an abridged form in the catechisms. Written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, this Divine code was received from the Almighty by Moses amid the thunders of Mount Sinai, and by him made the groundwork of the Mosaic Law. Christ resumed these Commandments in the double precept of charity--love of God and of the neighbour; He proclaimed them as binding under the New Law in Matthew 19 and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5)."
- **Vatican Council II:** Vatican Council II recalled the constant teaching on Sunday obligation in the following words: "On this day Christ's faithful must gather together, so that, by hearing the word of God and taking part in the eucharist, they may call to mind the passion, resurrection, and glorification of the Lord Jesus and may thank God, who 'has

begotten them again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). *Sacrosanctum Concilium* , art. 106: DOL 1, no. 106.

- **Catechism of the Catholic Church:** “The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. ‘Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church’” (No. 2177). Elsewhere the *Catechism* says, “The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: ‘On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.’ The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day” (No. 2180).
- **Code of Canon Law:** The Code says that “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass; they are also to abstain from those labors and business concerns which impede the worship to be rendered to God, the joy which is proper to the Lord's Day, or the proper relaxation of mind and body. (Canon 1247 - Code of Canon Law).
- **Precepts of the Church:** The *Catechism* says of the Church’s precepts: “The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor” (No. 2041). The Code of Canon Law states “A singular precept is a decree which directly and legitimately enjoins a specific person or persons to do or omit something, especially in order to urge the observance of law” (No. 49). There are five precepts in all. The first precept says that, “You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.” The second precept states, “You shall confess your sins at least once a year.” The third precept commands us [To] “receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season” The fourth precept says that we must, “observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.” And the fifth precept requires us to, “help provide for the (material) needs of the Church.”
- **Other Sources:** Numerous saints, Doctors of the Church, great theologians, and Popes down through the ages have reminded us of our obligation to keep holy the Lord’s Day. I have heard Fr. Moran say in numerous sermons over the years, “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day and it will keep you holy.” Countless times we Catholics have been told that missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin. Pope Innocent XI decreed on March 4, 1679 that they are heretics who deny that missing Mass on Sunday is a mortal sin.
- **Dies Domini:** Although there are many encyclicals, apostolic letters, and other Church documents reminding us our obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, the latest was John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (The Day of the Lord). In this document he says,

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“The Lord’s Day, on which the Paschal Mystery is celebrated, is by apostolic tradition to be observed in the universal Church as the primary holy day of obligation On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass. They are also to abstain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied whenever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite, either on a holy day itself or on the evening of the previous day (Canons 1246-1248).

The Catholic Church’s understanding of the Third Commandment could not be clearer. The faithful are gravely bound to worship together on Sundays and holy days of obligation by participating in the Sacrifice of the Mass. This is their primary obligation in observing this commandment of the Decalogue. The Church instructs us that we “are to avoid such work or business as would either interfere with their worship of God, or prevent them from celebrating the Lord’s Day with peaceful joy, or deprive them of such rest and relaxation of mind and body as every person requires.”

The Encyclical Dies Domini, Keep Holy the Lord’s Day

We are very concerned about two alarming developments that have taken place in the Catholic Church during the past few decades, especially in the U.S., regarding the Lord’s Day: One concern is the declining attendance of Catholics at weekly Sunday Mass; the other is the decline among Catholics in the belief of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Of course, this is related to the decline in Sunday church attendance.

Statistics on Declining Mass Attendance: According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, three polls conducted from 2000-2003 indicated, on average, that 33 percent of Catholics said they attended Mass every week. The researchers assumed that the less frequent attendees were relatively random in their attendance, adding an estimated additional 9 percent, bringing the total weekly Mass attendance to 41 percent. This is consistent with a Gallup surveys in 2003 that found, on average, only 40 percent of Catholics said they attended Mass within seven days of being surveyed.

CARA’s information was obtained in a series of ten national random-sample telephone polls of adult Catholics. They claim that attendance had not changed much over the survey period, which disputes the perception that Catholics are turning away from the Church in large numbers in recent years, especially in light of the recent clergy sexual abuse scandal.

However, the statistics are very poor compared with Mass attendance four decades ago. For example, data collected by the Gallup Organization indicates that Catholic Mass attendance has been in a precipitous decline since 1957 and 1958 when 74 % of Catholics reported attending weekly Mass within 7 days of the survey.

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As regards generational differences in church attendance, this is a very significant matter in explaining the long-term decline in Mass attendance. The decline can be explained largely by the death of older Catholics who attend Mass more often being gradually replaced by new adult Catholics who attend Mass much less often. In its research, CARA says that it uses three generational categories relevant to Catholics. These include the Pre-Vatican II Generation, the Vatican II Generation, and the Post-Vatican II Generation.

- **Pre-Vatican II Generation:** Those Catholics born before 1943 came of age in a period prior to the changes of the Second Vatican Council and tend to exhibit high levels of institutional loyalty, including loyalty to the Catholic Church.
- **Vatican II Generation:** Members of this generation were born between 1943 and 1960 and encompass the groups that came of age during a time of profound change in the Catholic Church and society as a whole. Overlapping the generation more widely known as the “baby boomers”, these Catholics entered adulthood during a time of great questioning of civic and cultural institutions.
- **Post-Vatican II Generation:** This generation, born after 1960, includes the largest numbers of adult Catholics (about half) who have no experience of the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. Due to its disproportionate size, CARA divides the Post-Vatican II Generation into two segments, one for those older than 30 and one for those between the ages of 18 and 30.

According to CARA Research Associate Mark M. Gray, Ph.D., in 2003 slightly more than 20 percent of Post-Vatican II Generation Catholics say they attend Mass at least once a week or more. By comparison, 52 percent of Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics and 38 percent of Vatican II Generation Catholics report weekly Mass attendance. He says that the levels of attendance by these generations are unchanged from CARA’s September 2000 poll.

He also says that there is no evidence that the Mass attendance of younger or older Catholics changed after allegations of clergy sexual abuse entered the news; however, stark generational differences in Mass attendance are evident that may in part reflect changes in the way Catholic teachings were communicated prior to and after the Second Vatican Council.

On the other hand, he says that Pre-Vatican II Generation Catholics grew up in an era where deliberately failing to attend Sunday Mass or other days of obligation, without good reason, was quite clearly communicated as a mortal sin. For the Vatican II and Post-Vatican II generations this has not been emphasized to the same degree.

Statistics on the Declining Catholic Belief in the Real Presence: The second problem that we are very concerned about is the declining belief of Catholics in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We think that the two problems are related. One of the main reasons that Mass attendance is down so much is the fact that so many Catholics no longer believe in the Real

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Presence. A student of mine did a survey after Mass a few years ago asking ten questions about the Catholic Faith. Few adults who answered the questions knew that Jesus was present the consecrated host. This is consistent with a 1992 Gallup poll that indicated the majority of Catholics are confused in their beliefs about Christ's presence in the Eucharist:

- Only 30 percent believed they were really and truly receiving the body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.
- 29 percent believe they are receiving bread and wine that symbolize the body and blood of Jesus (transignification or transfinalization).
- 10 percent believe they receive bread and wine in which Jesus is also present (consubstantiation, the Lutheran view).
- 24 percent believe they are receiving what has become Christ's body and blood because of their personal belief.

Any well-informed Catholic will recognize that only the first option, chosen by the only 30 percent, represents true Catholic teaching. The other options represent various Protestant beliefs. In other words, nearly 70 percent of all Catholics in this country hold erroneous beliefs about Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Generational differences in the belief of the Real Presence: The problem increases dramatically among younger Catholics. According to a more recent New York Times and CBS poll of Catholics who attend Mass regularly, the number of Catholics who accept the Real Presence decreases as age decreases:

- Age 65 and over: 51 percent believe in the Real Presence
- Age 45–64: 37 percent believe in Real Presence.
- Age 30–44: 28 percent believe in Real Presence.
- Age 18–29: 17 percent believe in Real Presence.

Seventy percent of this last age group, those 18–29, believe that the Eucharist is just a symbol. What does this tell us about how we have been passing the faith on to our children? Only one teenager in six accepts the fundamental doctrine of the Real Presence! This loss of faith among young and old alike explains the tremendous lack of devotion, reverence, and appreciation so many Catholics show at Mass and Holy Communion. Also, as we said above, we think that it is the main reason Mass attendance has declined so precipitously during the past four decades. Even many of those who attend are not reverent or know what is going on

Differences between countries: Of the other Western nations, Holland has one of the lowest records of Mass attendance. According to KASKI (the Catholic Social Ecclesiastical Institute), in the whole country only 9 percent of the faithful attend Mass on Sundays. In some areas of the larger cities only 3 percent attend Sunday Mass. Even in the large industrial town of Einhoven, home of the electrical and electronic multinational Philips, located in a formerly Catholic province, only 6 percent attend Mass on Sundays. To quote Fr. John Hardon, one of the greatest

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catechist of the twentieth century and formerly spiritual director to Mother Teresa:

In the United States alone, over 150 parishes have been closed in just three dioceses within the last few years. Most of the once flourishing, Catholic elementary and secondary schools have been closed. Catholic seminarians in our country have dropped by 90% in the last thirty years. Attendance at Sunday Mass, in not a few dioceses has dropped from 50-80% since the close of Vatican II. Behind this phenomenon is the loss of faith among so many once believing Roman Catholics.”

What explains the decline in belief in the Real Presence and consequently Mass attendance in the U.S. and other Western countries?

Cultural Reasons: Everyone who thinks about this matter has his list of culprits, but we think that the causes can be grouped under two general headings: Cultural and Sociological. By cultural we mean the way of life of a people, which includes not only material cultural artifacts, but a system of ideas as well. Our idea system in the Western World, and especially in the U.S., is dominated by skepticism, rationalism, materialism, relativism, and hedonism.

Skepticism

Simply put, skepticism is the view that humans cannot achieve complete or perfect knowledge of anything, especially in religious and moral matters. Except for a few hard scientific facts, the skeptic tells us that we can't know anything outside of our minds; all that we can know with any degree of certainty is what is in our minds, and even that is doubtful, because we can be mistaken for many reasons. The consequence of this is we can't know anything with certainty, because there is no objective truth or reality that exists outside of us, or at least we can't know it. When applied to morality, since we can't know anything with certainty, morality is considered entirely a matter of individual preference or opinion; there are no fixed and eternal values. As we will soon see, skepticism leads to other ideologies, such as rationalism and relativism, because all values are considered relative to time, place, circumstance, situation, relevance, context, consequence, proportion, or some other such notion. The true skeptic is a chronic doubter. There is nothing wrong with a healthy methodic doubt, after all one shouldn't be gullible, but when sufficient proof has been given regarding some matter, especially in matters of religion or morality, we are obligated to give assent to it.

Rationalism

Rationalism comes from a Latin word meaning “belonging to reason.” In philosophy it means a theory that holds that reason alone, unaided by experience, can arrive at basic truth regarding the world. It is ironic that rationalism got its main start from Rene Descartes, a seventeenth century French philosopher who formulated his philosophy of methodic doubt to counter the skepticism

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of his day. Associated with rationalism is the doctrine of innate ideas and the method of logically deducing truths about the world from “self-evident” premises. This describes Descartes methodology. The opposite of rationalism is empiricism, an approach that utilizes the senses and experimentation with which to verify knowledge. Rationalism is not necessarily bad if it doesn’t exclude empiricism and theology as valid methods of searching for truth. Rationalism and the other isms that we are considering have come to dominate our thinking to the exclusion of religion and of things of the spirit.

Materialism

Materialism is a philosophic system that denies the existence of any other kind of substance other than that composed of matter, such as spirit, and claims that all phenomena of the universe can and must be explained by matter and the forces or energies inherent in and intrinsically dependent upon matter. From a practical point of view, materialism is an excessive desire for material goods, the acquisition of things, such as power, property, prestige, privilege, or possessions.

Relativism

Recall that we said above that moral skepticism leads to relativism. Relativism is the view that truth is relative and may vary from individual to individual, from group to group, or from time to time, having no objective standard. An example is cultural relativism, which claims that different cultures have different, but perfectly legitimate and equally valid standards of truth and value. Relativism is often just another word for subjectivism. By subjectivism I mean an ideology or philosophy that holds the only valid standard of judgment is that of the individual. For example, ethical subjectivism holds that individual conscience is the only appropriate standard for moral judgment. Pope Benedict believes our biggest enemy is moral relativism, the belief that something is right or wrong depending on time, place, circumstance, situation, relevance, consequence, context, proportion, etc.

Hedonism

Hedonism is an ethical system that holds that feelings of pleasure or happiness are the highest and final aim of conduct, so that actions increasing the sum of pleasure are thereby right and those increasing pain are thereby wrong. Practically speaking, hedonism is an excessive desire for pleasure. It is an excessive desire to have fun.

All of these “isms” have contributed to a loss of faith in affluent Western societies. The reason for this is to the extent our lives are dominated by skepticism, rationalism, materialism, relativism, and hedonism, we are not Christ-like; we are not like Jesus; we are not leading our lives in accordance with God’s will; we are not obeying his commandments as we should. No matter how

much we might know about Jesus, and in today's world chances are many of us don't know very much, most of us don't know him personally very well, if at all. Faith, that is our belief in God and his promises, can be strong only to the extent our lives are configured to Jesus'. Only to the extent we achieve being images of God—the image he created us to be—will our faith be strong. Faith is an infused virtue; one placed in our souls by God, and to the extent that one's life is dominated by false ideologies, such as skepticism, rationalism, materialism, relativism, and hedonism, the weaker will be his or her faith, and we might add will be the other infused theological virtues—hope and charity. There simply isn't room for God when our lives are dominated by false ideologies. The more we make our wills in accordance with God's will and obey his commandments, the more of God's grace will we have in their souls, and grace is God's life in our souls, it is our participation in the inner life of the Trinity who dwells in us when we are in a state of sanctifying grace. The more grace we have, the more faith, hope, and charity we will have. We have to live the Faith to have faith.

Sociological Reasons: Now that we have discussed cultural reasons for the decline in Mass attendance and belief in the Real presence, let's discuss sociological reasons. Sociology involves the way a society is structured and functions or operates. Several sociological reasons could be given for a loss of faith among Americans and the people of other affluent nations, but the rising of later generations of Catholics into the middle and upper classes has been one of the most important factors in their secularization. 1) By secularization we mean a this-worldly orientation rather than an otherworldly one. The opposite of secular is spiritual. More affluent people tend to be more secular minded. 2) An equally important sociological factor that had contributed to the secularization of the American people is an increase in their educational levels. As Catholics have become more educated, or miseducated, the more secular they have become, even to the point that there hardly exists any difference between Catholics and non-Catholics on this matter. Higher educated people tend to become more secular minded; they tend to become more secular whether they be Catholics or of other faiths or of no faith. 3) Urbanization, no doubt, has contributed to the secularization of the American people, including Catholics. Urban people tend to be more secular in their way of thinking. 4) Also industrialization has been correlated with a weakening of religious faith, probably because industrial economies produce more goods and services, which tend to make people more affluent and as a result more materialistic. 5) Science and technology has contributed in various ways to the secularization of Americans and those living in affluent countries.

Another factor that we would add to the cause of the decline in Mass attendance and belief in the Real Presence is that after Vatican II the theological liberals or neo-Modernists virtually took over the various institutions of the Church in the U.S and Europe. Although the subject is a very complex one, by neo-Modernist I mean those who want to water down the teachings of the Church to better suit the modern world. The liberal, that is those who wanted to make substantial changes in the Church, occupied many if not most of the key positions in the chanceries, deaneries, and parishes. They took over most of the Catholic press and publishing houses. They came to control the parochial school system. They hijacked the catechetical establishment in the Church at all levels. Much of the decline in the Catholic Church in the U.S. during the past 40 years can be

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attributed to poor catechesis of our children. The emphasis has been too heavily on the experiential at almost the total expense of the doctrinal. In addition, the liturgical establishment in the Church came to be dominated by neo-Modernists. Also, many religious orders were captured by the liberals as well as many hospitals and most of the seminaries, colleges and universities. Most schools of higher education today are Catholic in name only. And this list hardly exhausts the organizations in the Church controlled by liberals. All of this has had an impact on Mass attendance and belief in the Real Presence.

What effect do these ideologies have on Catholics belief in the Real Presence and Mass attendance? We believe that Fr. John Hardon S.J., has the best answer for these questions. Until his death in 2002, he was one of the world's greatest catechists. Not only did he write several fine catechisms for the general Catholic membership, but also he wrote numerous articles and conducted many seminars and conferences on catechetical subjects. He founded and was very active in the Real Presence Association, whose goal was to promote Eucharistic Education and Adoration. The Real Presence Association is a nationally focused apostolate promoting perpetual adoration. Their start-up manual contains the principals of Eucharistic adoration according to church teaching, counsel for leadership by local pastors, pointers for parish catechesis and for setting up a chapel for adoration. Fr. Hardon tells us that Pope John Paul II himself gave him direct orders to do everything he could to restore faith in the Real Presence in his country, otherwise, the Pope said, "I fear for the survival of many of your dioceses in America."

Fr Hardon tells us that the loss of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is due to an overall loss of faith. He says that faith is something that we believe on the word of another (See our essay on this website *Reasons to Believe: Natural Theology* for a complete discussion of this topic). He says that it is one thing to believe in what other people tell us and something else to believe in God. To believe in what people tell us is called human faith. To believe in what God has revealed to us is called Divine faith. To make sure we understand what he means by this, Fr. Hardon goes on to say that Divine faith is the assent of our intellect to what God has revealed, not because we understand what God tells us is true, but only because we accept a truth on his authority. We believe what God tells us because he who is goodness and truth can neither deceive, nor be deceived.

According to Fr. Hardon, the Church is faced with a crisis of faith. He means by this that we are in a critical period in the Church's life when millions of her faithful are confused about their beliefs. He says that "they are uncertain about what as Catholics they are to hold. And as a result they are emotionally insecure, bewildered and, in Christ's words, wandering as sheep without a shepherd."

Fr. Hardon identifies three groups of people in the Church regarding their faith:

- Some are in open rebellion against the faith of their fathers.
- Others are not yet ready to discard the Faith; they may still cherish with one part of their being, maybe for emotional or ritual or personal reasons.

- A third group of people are not rejecting the Faith or in serious doubt about Catholic doctrine, but they are bewildered. Fr. Hardon says that modern popes have addressed in their documents the synonyms for bewilderment that besets millions of the still faithful. He says that are “confused, and distraught, and perplexed, and worried and some are all but crushed by the spectacle of a post-conciliar Church that is caught up in an interior convulsion of spirit that has rocked all of Christendom to its foundations.”

Fr. Hardon thinks that such a crisis come about in the first place in the Catholic Church, because there has been an intrusion of alien ideas. He says that an idea is alien to any religion when it openly contradicts what that religion stands for. Perhaps he had in mind some of the ideas that we above: skepticism, materialism, hedonism, and the like, but during one of his conference talks he referred to theological ideas specific to theological matters. Among the alien ideas introduced into the Church that he mentions are that God is merely finite; that Jesus is merely human; that the priesthood is not a sacramental ministry, but merely a functional ministry; that marriage is dissoluble; that religious life should be without rules; that Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist is merely symbolic, and other aberrations. These and other many other alien ideas appear so plausible, even persuasive, because they are usually presented in a manner intended to make them appear orthodox. Regarding these alien ideas, Fr. Hardon says, “Either the Catholic Church remains constant in her fundamental articles of faith, over the centuries, or she is no longer the Church founded by Christ.”

We need champions of the Faith to rescue us from the plight we are in according Fr. Hardon. In this regard, he says:

No one who knows what the situation is, doubts that the Catholic Church is going through a veritable emergency of faith. What is an emergency but a time for urgent decisions, that is discriminating judgment? What leaders of the Church need to do today is not be shaken by the storm that is raging all around them, but to hold on literally for dear life to what Christ has revealed, to what has been defended for us by the champions of orthodoxy like Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great, lived out before us by saints and mystics like Benedict, Francis and Ignatius Loyola, like Clare, Margaret Mary and Teresa, like Elizabeth Seton and Thomas More, and experienced by us in whatever span of life we have so far lived.

And I might add champions of the Faith for our time, such as St. Padre Pio, Blessed Mother Teresa, Mother Angelica, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and we would add Fr. John Hardon whose cause for canonization has been moving along nicely.

Applying the idea of a crisis of Faith and alien ideas to the Eucharist: Fr. Hardon says that the seat of the crisis in the Roman Catholic Church is the widespread loss of faith in the Real Presence. He delivered a talk at a conference several years ago where he started by discussing an encyclical Pope Paul VI had written over thirty years previous on the Real Presence entitled *Mysterium Fidei*, in English Mystery of Faith. He said that a crisis of faith in the Eucharist among

once believing Catholics had gotten so serious that Pope Paul VI published his encyclical on the Real Presence during the sessions of Vatican Council II. He tells us that the Pope was concerned that “liturgical innovations, which the council had introduced, would be positively harmful to the Catholic Church unless the faithful firmly believed and clearly understood the mystery of faith which is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.” Fr. Hardon quotes Pope Paul VI as writing:

The fundamental truth about the Eucharist that Christ revealed was what he taught, that which is described in the sixth chapter of St. John’s gospel. Jesus had just fed the multitude, thousands, with five loaves and two fishes. Then He told the multitude that they must be fed not only in body but also and mainly in soul. And that is why He would give His followers nothing less than His own body to eat and blood to drink. Having said this, not only to casual on lookers but many, the apostles told us, many of His own disciples said to one another, “This is intolerable language. Who can believe it?”

Commenting on the Pope’s statement, Fr. Hardon says, “That sixth chapter of St. John was not only history it was prophecy. This has been the story of the mystery of the Real Presence for the last almost two thousand years. And this is the situation today, except that now millions of once professed Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence.” Elsewhere Fr. Hardon says, “It is the sixth Chapter of Saint John’s Gospel but now on a global scale.” What he is talking about is Jesus’ “Bread of Life” sermon found in the 6th Chapter of St. John’s Gospel.

The alien ideas or errors Fr. Hardon is referring to are ones discussed in some detail above in this essay on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He tells us that Pope Paul VI uses two words to summarize this Eucharist Crisis: they are the errors of transignification and transfinalization. Transignification is the view that means when the consecration at Mass is performed, only a change of meaning or significance of the bread and wine takes place; their substances do not change. This view is contrary to the Catholic view of transubstantiation, which states that at the words of consecration the substances of bread and wine are literally transformed into the substances of the Body and Blood of Christ. In transignification, the consecrated elements are said to signify all that Christians associate with the Last Supper. Consequently, the bread and wine acquire a higher meaning than merely food for the body, but they simply remain bread and wine. In other words, the meaning of the bread and wine changes, but not the matter or substance. Something that had served a profane use now in the words of Karl Rahner “becomes the dwelling place and the symbol of Christ who is present and gives Himself to His own.” Fr. Hardon says that through various theologians, such as Rahner, the idea of transignification has permeated the Eucharistic theology of whole nations. The theory of transignification was condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965), if it is understood as denying transubstantiation.

Transfinalization is the view that the purpose or finality of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is changed by the words of consecration, but what remains after the consecration is still bread and wine. In other words, the bread and wine now serve a new function as sacred elements that arouse the faith of the people in Christ’s redemptive love. As one can readily see, the meaning of

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transignification and transfinalization are similar, except that in each case, the bread and wine remain bread and wine after the consecration.

The main thing to remember about both of these views is there is no change in their being bread and wine at the consecration—they merely take on a new meaning. Edward Schillebeeckx, the leading proponent of transfinalization tells us that the purpose of the Eucharistic elements is simply to make Christ's presence more intimate. Proponents of both views speak of the Real Presence, but their idea of real presence is that Christ is present both before and after the consecration, but in a more intimate way afterwards. Somehow the host mysteriously mediates between the Lord and his church and the individual believer. Essentially this is a Protestant notion of the Eucharist. Like transignification, this theory was condemned by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* (1965) if transfinalization is taken to deny the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

The consequence of these alien notions among Catholics: Fr. Hardon says that these and other alien ideas have caused Catholics to lose their belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, which explains why millions of once professed Catholics no longer genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. He asked:

Who would genuflect before a piece of bread?" Father goes on to say, "Thirty years of erroneous teaching about the Real Presence has deeply affected and infected the minds of millions—and I mean that figure—millions of still professed Catholics. Pope John Paul speaks of this dissemination of untruth in seminaries and universities—Holy Father how right you are, how sadly right you are. These ideas have penetrated into the minds of the leaders in the Catholic Church both among the clergy and among the laity and among the erroneous ideas I place at root the teaching about the Real Presence. [He concludes by saying], Believe me there is much more at stake, much more than meets the eye. Everything in the Catholic faith depends on whether Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist as the Real Presence. Why do we say this? Because the Real Presence implies and includes the teaching that Christ ordained the Apostles at the Last Supper. He gave them the priestly power to change bread and wine into His own flesh and blood."

As we discussed above in the section on the Nicene Creed, the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Faith, and anything that calls into questions its efficacy is detrimental to the Faith.

John Paul II's Theological Foundations for Mass Participation

This Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* contains a lot. The only portion of the letter we are going to consider is the one in which he discusses the theological foundations for keeping holy the Lord's Day, Chapters II and III. After carefully outlining in Chapter I what the Church has said from the beginning about keeping holy the Lord's Day and how Sunday Mass attendance has declined so

much over the past several decades, the Pope provides the theological reasons why we should keep Sunday holy. They are as follows:

- **The Lord's Day begins with in the Genesis story:** John Paul begins with the Genesis story of the creation. He says in this regard, "In order to grasp fully the meaning of Sunday, therefore, we must re-read the great story of creation and deepen our understanding of the theology of the "Sabbath". Then he quotes Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" followed by Genesis 2:2, "On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done."
- **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy:** Pope John Paul then quotes Genesis 2:3, "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." He says, "In the first place, therefore, Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, the Lord's Day."
- **The Lord's Day is kept holy by remembering:** Quoting the Decalogue or Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus, the Pope tells us to, "Remember the Sabbath day in order to keep it holy" (20:8). He says that the inspired text goes on to give the reason for this, "recalling as it does the work of God: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

The Pope asked, "What is it we are to remember"? He answers, "It is a call to awaken remembrance of the grand and fundamental work of God which is creation, a remembrance which must inspire the entire religious life of man and then fill the day on which man is called to rest. Rest therefore acquires a sacred value: the faithful are called to rest not only as God rested, but to rest in the Lord, bringing the entire creation to him, in praise and thanksgiving, intimate as a child and friendly as a spouse.

- **The Lord's Day is the weekly Easter:** In this section, John Paul tells us why we celebrate on Sunday, the reason being "the venerable Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we do so not only at Easter but also at each turning of the week." This is why Sunday is the weekly Easter. The Pope goes on to say, "In the light of this constant and universal tradition, it is clear that, although the Lord's Day is rooted in the very work of creation and even more in the mystery of the biblical 'rest' of God, it is nonetheless to the Resurrection of Christ that we must look in order to understand fully the Lord's Day. This is what the Christian Sunday does, leading the faithful each week to ponder and live the event of Easter, true source of the world's salvation."
- **The Lord's Day is the day of the new creation:** To demonstrate that the Lord's Day is the day of a new creation, the Pope compares the Christian Sunday with the Old Testament vision of the Sabbath. He says that this "prompted theological insights of great

interest.” He states that, “Christian thought spontaneously linked the Resurrection, which took place on ‘the first day of the week’, with the first day of that cosmic week (Genesis 1:1 - 2:4) which shapes the creation story in the Book of Genesis: the day of the creation of light (1:3-5). This link invited an understanding of the Resurrection as the beginning of a new creation, the first fruits of which is the glorious Christ, ‘the first born of all creation’ (Colossians 1:15) and ‘the first born from the dead’ (Colossians 1:18).”

John Paul ties the new creation to baptism when he says, “In effect, Sunday is the day above all other days which summons Christians to remember the salvation which was given to them in baptism and which has made them new in Christ. ‘You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead’” (Colossians 2:12; cf. Romans 6:4-6).

- **The Lord’s Day is the day of Christ-Light:** In this regard, the Pope states, “Wise pastoral intuition suggested to the Church the christianization of the notion of Sunday as ‘the day of the sun’, which was the Roman name for the day and which is retained in some modern languages. This was in order to draw the faithful away from the seduction of cults which worshipped the sun, and to direct the celebration of the day to Christ, humanity’s true ‘sun.’” Recall that Jesus said that he is the light of the world (See especially John 9:5).
- **The Lord’s Day is the day of the gift of the Spirit:** In this section, the Pope says that “The outpouring of the Spirit was the great gift of the Risen Lord to his disciples on Easter Sunday.” Furthermore, “Sunday, the day of light, could also be called the day of ‘fire’, in reference to the Holy Spirit. The light of Christ is intimately linked to the ‘fire’ of the Spirit, and the two images together reveal the meaning of the Christian Sunday.” Then John Paul tells how the Jesus appeared to the Apostles in the Upper Room on the Easter evening. Then Jesus told them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23). Moreover, it was on a Sunday fifty days after the Resurrection that the Spirit descended in power, as “a mighty wind” and “fire” (Acts 2:2-3), upon the Apostles gathered with Mary. The Pope says, “Pentecost is not only the founding event of the Church, but is also the mystery which for ever gives life to the Church.”
- **The Lord’s Day is the day of faith:** Sunday is in the Pope’s words, “the supreme day of faith.” He says, “It is the day when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the Church’s living “memory” (cf. John 14:26), the first appearance of the Risen Lord becomes an event renewed in the ‘today’ of each of Christ’s disciples. Gathered in his presence in the Sunday assembly, believers sense themselves called like the Apostle Thomas: ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands. Put out your hand, and place it in my side. Doubt no longer, but believe’ (John 20:27). Yes, Sunday is the day of faith. This is stressed by the fact that the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy, like the liturgy of other solemnities, includes the Profession of Faith. Recited or sung, the Creed declares the baptismal and Paschal character of Sunday,

making it the day on which in a special way the baptized renew their adherence to Christ and his Gospel in a rekindled awareness of their baptismal promises.” In other words, every time we go to Mass we renew our baptismal vows and our covenant with the Lord.

- **The Lord’s Day is an indispensable day:** John Paul concludes this chapter by saying, “It is clear then why, even in our own difficult times, the identity of this day must be protected and above all must be lived in all its depth.”

Upon completing his discussion of the theological foundation or fundamentals of keeping holy the Lord’s Day, John Paul goes on in Chapter III to outline and describe the Eucharistic Assembly, which is the heart of Sunday. He calls this chapter *Dies Ecclesiae*, the Day of the Church. The Pope’s main themes in Chapter III are as follows:

- **The Risen Lord is present in the Eucharistic Assembly:** About the Lord’s presence, the Pope says, “At Sunday Mass, Christians relive with particular intensity the experience of the Apostles on the evening of Easter when the Risen Lord appeared to them as they were gathered together (cf. John 20:19). In a sense, the People of God of all times were present in that small nucleus of disciples, the first fruits of the Church.” Elsewhere in this section he says, “As the day of Resurrection, Sunday is not only the remembrance of a past event: it is a celebration of the living presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his own people.”
- **The Eucharistic Assembly is a community of believers:** John Paul tells us in this section that the community aspect of the Eucharistic Assembly should particularly be stressed at the Sunday Mass. Of this he says, “among the many activities of a parish, ‘none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist’ . . . ‘For Christian families, the Sunday assembly is one of the most outstanding expressions of their identity and their “ministry” as “domestic churches”, when parents share with their children at the one Table of the word and of the Bread of Life.’”
- **The Eucharistic Assembly is a Pilgrim People:** In this regard, the Pope states, “As the Church journeys through time, the reference to Christ’s Resurrection and the weekly recurrence of this solemn memorial help to remind us of the pilgrim and eschatological character of the People of God. Sunday after Sunday the Church moves towards the final ‘Lord’s Day’, that Sunday which knows no end. The expectation of Christ’s coming is inscribed in the very mystery of the Church and is evidenced in every Eucharistic celebration.”
- **The Mass Renews the Covenant:** Regarding this matter, the Pope states, “It should also be borne in mind that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as a dialogue between God and his People, a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated. On their part, the People of

God are drawn to respond to this dialogue of love by giving thanks and praise, also by demonstrating their fidelity to the task of continual "conversion". The Sunday assembly commits us therefore to an inner renewal of our baptismal promises, which are in a sense implicit in the recitation of the Creed, and are an explicit part of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil and whenever Baptism is celebrated during Mass."

- **The Lord's Day is the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist:** The Pope says that whenever Mass is celebrated, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday assembly at the twofold table of the word and of the Bread of Life. He reminds us that the Second Vatican Council said, "the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely joined together that they form a single act of worship."

In regard to the Table of the Word, the Pope says, "The table of the word offers the same understanding of the history of salvation and especially of the Paschal Mystery which the Risen Jesus himself gave to his disciples: it is Christ who speaks, present as he is in his word 'when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church.'" Regarding the Table of the Bread of Life, he says, "At the table of the Bread of Life, the Risen Lord becomes really, substantially and enduringly present through the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection, and the Bread of Life is offered as a pledge of future glory." What the Pope has to say about the Mass is so important, we will quote him at length here:

The Mass in fact truly makes present the sacrifice of the Cross. Under the species of bread and wine, upon which has been invoked the outpouring of the Spirit who works with absolutely unique power in the words of consecration, Christ offers himself to the Father in the same act of sacrifice by which he offered himself on the Cross. 'In this divine sacrifice which is accomplished in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once and for all in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner'. To his sacrifice Christ unites the sacrifice of the Church: 'In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value'. The truth that the whole community shares in Christ's sacrifice is especially evident in the Sunday gathering, which makes it possible to bring to the altar the week that has passed, with all its human burdens.

Other themes found in the encyclical are as follows:

- **From Mass to mission:** The word Mass is derived from the Latin *Missio* or mission in English. A mission is defined as a continuing task or responsibility that one is destined or fitted to do or specially called upon to undertake. In the old Latin order of the Mass, The Tridentine Mass, the priest dismissed the congregation with *Ite, missa est*, meaning go, you are dismissed. In the *Novus Ordo* or New Order of the Mass, the priest dismisses the congregation with, "The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord." The words of dismissal represent Christ's Ascension, when he sent his Apostles to go forth and evangelize the world. What John Paul has to say about this being sent forth is well worth quoting:

Receiving the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ ready themselves to undertake with the strength of the Risen Lord and his Spirit the tasks which await them in their ordinary life. For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Like the first witnesses of the Resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelize and bear witness in their daily lives.

- **The Sunday obligation:** Regarding the Sunday obligation, the Pope, says, “Since the Eucharist is the very heart of Sunday, it is clear why, from the earliest centuries, the Pastors of the Church have not ceased to remind the faithful of the need to take part in the liturgical assembly.” In the early days, the Church didn’t need to have requirements for Mass attendance, but the Pope goes on to point out that it was only later when the fervor of the faithful died down that the Church found it necessary to resort to specific canonical precepts requiring attendance.

Today, John Paul tells us that Church members, “live in surroundings which are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times—more frequently in fact—indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message. If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant.”

- **Other moments of the Christian Sunday:** Finally, the Pope tells us that although the heart of Sunday is the Mass, we have a duty to mark the rest of the day by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work. About this he says, “This commits each of Christ's disciples to shape the other moments of the day—those outside the liturgical context: family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation—in such a way that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life.” To fill the rest of the day, John Paul suggests that families spend time in a more intense experience of faith, such as family prayer or visits to near-by shrines.
- **Sunday is a day of solidarity:** By solidarity the Pope means the performance of works of mercy. About this matter he says, “The Eucharist is an event and programme of true brotherhood. From the Sunday Mass there flows a tide of charity destined to spread into the whole life of the faithful, beginning by inspiring the very way in which they live the rest of Sunday. If Sunday is a day of joy, Christians should declare by their actual behaviour that we cannot be happy ‘on our own’. They look around to find people who may need their help. It may be that in their neighbourhood or among those they know there are sick people, elderly people, children or immigrants who precisely on Sundays feel more keenly their isolation, needs and suffering. It is true that commitment to these people cannot be restricted to occasional Sunday gestures. But presuming a wider sense of commitment,

why not make the Lord's Day a more intense time of sharing, encouraging all the inventiveness of which Christian charity is capable? Inviting to a meal people who are alone, visiting the sick, providing food for needy families, spending a few hours in voluntary work and acts of solidarity: these would certainly be ways of bringing into people's lives the love of Christ received at the Eucharistic table. Lived in this way, not only the Sunday Eucharist but the whole of Sunday becomes a great school of charity, justice and peace.”

- **Sunday is the day of rest:** We will conclude our discussion of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* by considering what he says about Sunday as a day of rest. On this subject he says, “The alternation between work and rest, built into human nature, is willed by God himself, as appears in the creation story in the Book of Genesis (Genesis2:2-3; Exodus20:8-11): rest is something ‘sacred’, because it is man's way of withdrawing from the sometimes excessively demanding cycle of earthly tasks in order to renew his awareness that everything is the work of God. There is a risk that the prodigious power over creation which God gives to man can lead him to forget that God is the Creator upon whom everything depends. It is all the more urgent to recognize this dependence in our own time, when science and technology have so incredibly increased the power which man exercises through his work . . . Through Sunday rest, daily concerns and tasks can find their proper perspective: the material things about which we worry give way to spiritual values; in a moment of encounter and less pressured exchange, we see the true face of the people with whom we live.”

The Pope goes on to say that the beauties of nature can be rediscovered and enjoyed to the full on the Lord's Day. In this regard, he says, “As the day on which man is at peace with God, with himself and with others, Sunday becomes a moment when people can look anew upon the wonders of nature, allowing themselves to be caught up in that marvellous and mysterious harmony which, in the words of Saint Ambrose, weds the many elements of the cosmos in a ‘bond of communion and peace’ by ‘an inviolable law of concord and love.” Men and women then come to a deeper sense, as the Apostle says, “everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim 4:4-5).

Biblical background of Sabbath

The longest biblical text in the Decalogue is for the Third Commandment. While both Exodus and Deuteronomy prescribe the Sabbath, Fr. Hardon explains that the motive and the manner of its observance are different. Both passages, though lengthy, should be quoted in full. In Exodus, the Sabbath is a weekly commemoration of God's creation:

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do your work, but the seventh is a sabbath for Yahweh, your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals,

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nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day He rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the sabbath day and made it sacred (Exodus 20:8-11).

In Deuteronomy, the Sabbath is prescribed as a weekly commemoration of God's deliverance of His people, as the following words indicate:

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as Yahweh, your God, has commanded you . . . Remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Yahweh, your God, brought you out from there with mighty hand and outstretched arm; because of this, Yahweh, your God, has commanded you to keep the sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

No Jewish observance figures more prominently in the New Testament than the Sabbath. Christianity retained the Sabbath and elevated it to a unique dignity.

Old Testament Observance: Fr. Hardon informs us that observing the Sabbath was one of the most important precepts of pre-Christian Judaism. It was developed independent of the temple and became identified with the synagogue, even among the Jews of the dispersion, who lived far from Jerusalem. The Sabbath marked off the Jewish people from the Gentiles, and for much of their history was the one visible sign of being a true Israelite. He states:

As the rabbis began to explain the meaning of the Sabbath rest, a variety of interpretations arose. There were no less than thirty-nine types of work classified by experts in Judaic law. Forbidden on the Sabbath were the lighting of fire, clapping the hands, visiting the sick, and walking beyond a certain distance. A Sabbath day's journey, referred to by St. Luke, was about three thousand feet (Acts 1:12), unless a person set up a temporary domicile by depositing a personal possession some distance from home.

New Testament Teaching: Jesus observed the Sabbath according to reasonable standards, and occasionally taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31). But soon the Pharisees began to criticize his disciples for rubbing grain between their hands on the Sabbath, which was condemned as work. Christ was especially severe in rebuking those who condemned his performing miracles of healing on the Sabbath. Fr. Hardon comments on Jesus' teaching regarding the Sabbath:

His decisive teaching is summed up in the sentence that, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is master even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In saying this, Jesus laid the foundation for the Christian observance of the Third Commandment. There is, indeed, to be one day set aside each week to become what it now is, the Lord's Day. But the emphasis is to be on giving the day to the Lord.

Fr. Hardon informs us that "there are references in apostolic times to the reading of the prophets and the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) on the Sabbath to present the gospel to Jewish audiences (Acts 13:14, 16:13)." However, soon the Judaizing Christians tried to impose the

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Sabbath observance on Gentile Christians. The result was that Paul declared that no one may be held bound to observe the Sabbath (Colossians 2:16), until finally Christians were completely freed from the Jewish obligations of the Sabbath law at the Council of Jerusalem in 49 A.D.

Sunday Observance: Fr. Hardon further informs us that the name “Sunday” for the first day of the week was borrowed from the Romans who had borrowed it from the Egyptians. It was dedicated among the pagans to the sun which was worshipped as a god. But already in the first century, Christians understood Christ as the “Sun of Justice” (Malachi 4:2), and therefore the one true God who became man. He was the one whom they worshipped on Sunday. Moreover, the name in Christian language was changed to the “Lord’s Day,” as used by St. John the Apostle during his exile for the faith. “I was on the island of Patmos,” he wrote, “for having preached God’s word and witnessed for Jesus; it was the Lord’s Day and the Spirit possessed me” (Revelation 1:10). In regard to the Christians meeting on the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath day, Fr. Hardon says:

The Christian practice of meeting on the first day of the week to celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice is clearly described in the Acts of the Apostles and in St. Paul (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2). In The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (first century), the faithful are told, “On the Lord’s Day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks (*eucharistesate*); but first confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure: (*Didache* 14).

The great late first century bishop St. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of Christians as “no longer observing the Sabbath but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day, on which also our Lord rose again” (Letter to the Magnesians, 9). Fr. Hardon tells us:

[W]ith the end of the great persecutions in the early fourth century, the Church began to make laws on the proper observance of Sunday. Thus in Spain, the bishops legislated that, ‘If anyone in the city neglects to come to church for three Sundays, let him be excommunicated for a short time so that he may be corrected’ (Council of Elvira, 306 A.D.). About the same time laws were passed requiring the faithful to hear Mass and rest from servile work on Sunday. In drafting these laws, it was stated that both practices go back to the teaching of the apostles.

Three reasons were given why Sunday was established as the principal feast day each week for the faithful:

- It is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world (St. Justin Martyr, 165 A.D.).
- It is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead (St. Justin).
- It is the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost, in the form of tongues of fire (St. Isidore of Seville, 636 A.D.).

Church's Legislation: The Code of Canon contains several canons regarding our obligations on Sunday's and other holy days.

The code lists the following holy days for observation: the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Epiphany; the Ascension; the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ; the feast of Mary the Mother of God; her Immaculate Conception; her Assumption; the feast of St. Joseph; the feast of the Apostles; Saints Peter and Paul, and the feast of All Saints. However, the code allows for National Episcopal Conference, with prior approval, to declare certain days not holy days of obligation during week days and to transfer them to Sundays.

Furthermore, the faithful are obligated to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, and to "abstain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body." The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied whenever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite, either on a holy day itself or on the evening of the previous day (Canons 1246-1248). They are also to avoid such work or business that "would either interfere with their worship of God, or prevent them from celebrating the Lord's Day with peaceful joy, or deprive them of such rest and relaxation of mind and body as every person requires."

Acts forbidden by the Third Commandment include:

- By doing servile (physical) works on Sunday, or causing others to do the like without necessity.
- By employing a considerable part of Sundays or holidays in temporal affairs, as is often the case with merchants, advocates, solicitors, etc.
- By missing Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation without a serious reason, or not hearing it with due attention and reverence.
- By spending Sundays and holidays exclusively in idleness, gaming, dancing, feasting, and other recreations.
- By not dedicating a considerable part of those days to reading and praying, and by not taking care that those under your charge do the like.
- Doing unnecessary work on Sunday for a long period of time, i.e., more than several hours.
- Intentional failure to fast or abstain on appointed days.
- Requiring employees to work on Sunday in non-essential occupations.

This list and a discussion of this topic could take up many more pages. Each individual should consult a priest confessor regarding particular aspects of this commandment. In other words, matters of what one can and can't do on Sunday. God wants us to rest and do things that we enjoy doing on Sunday's, but also we are required first to fulfill out Sunday obligation to God celebrating Mass and to spend some time in prayer and meditation.

IV. The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

Deuteronomy 20:12 states, "Honor your father and mother so that you may have a long life in the land in which the Lord your God is giving you." Fr. Hardon tells us that, "Since the dawn of Christianity, the Church has consistently interpreted the fourth commandment as prescribing obedience to all legitimate authority. Summarily, especially to three forms of authority: obedience of children to their parents in domestic society, the obedience of citizens to civil authority, and the obedience of the faithful to the authority of the Church in ecclesiastical society." In other words, the Fourth Commandment orders us to love, respect, and obey our parents and whoever holds authority over us.



"HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG IN THE LAND THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GIVING YOU." (EXODUS 20:12)

Obedience is the moral virtue most important here. Obedience has been defined by moral theologians as that, "which inclines the will to comply with the will of another person who has a right to command." Obedience is a moral virtue that comes under the cardinal virtue of justice. I will discuss the four cardinal virtues below in this essay. All genuine authority comes from God; therefore, we are obliged to obey those who are vested by God with authority. However, there are limits to this authority. We are not required to obey the commands of those in authority if their commands require us to engage in immoral actions. What they command us to do must be consistent with God's will. Two of the greatest of the virtues (good habits) are humility and obedience. Jesus is our example of perfect humility and obedience. We can become like him only to the extent that we become humble and obedient to God's will. He was obedient to even suffering death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). Fr. Hardon says by his obedience, Jesus expiated our disobedience and "thus enable us to reach heaven in spite of our sins of disobedience."

Fr. Hardon tells us that in order to understand the Church's position on this issue, we must consider obedience in general and then to see how Christ elevated the practice of obedience beyond anything previously known or conceived in the Old Testament. To accomplish this, he says that two questions must be considered: What is obedience? And then how did Christ elevate the practice of this virtue?

The meaning of obedience

Fr. Hardon defines obedience as "the moral virtue which inclines the will to comply with the will of another person who has a right to command. Thus defined, that is the standard definition in

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Catholic theology. Thus defined we see that obedience is a moral virtue under the four cardinal virtues and more specifically belongs to the cardinal virtue of justice. Someone then in authority has the right to command.”

Then he goes on to inform us that we should distinguish two kinds of authority before we go any further. He states:

There is what is called dominative authority; the kind we’re talking about here. The authority of one in a society to command those in that society to obey with their wills. But there is also intellectual authority; the authority of someone . . . to be believed. And here the authority depends on both the knowledge of the one who allegedly has the authority, knowledge, and integrity. And then such a person can be believed. I can trust the one whom I am to believe knows what he or she is saying and is telling the truth.

Since words can have more than one meaning, he is talking about the kind of authority called dominative, meaning “of one who has a right to command the will and then if someone has the right to command, those under authority have the duty to obey so that the two words authority and obedience are correlative.”

Properly speaking, Fr. Hardon says, obedience is given to someone who has authority in a society, which has a purpose or goal and has certain agreed upon means to achieve that purpose. He adds, “Then within that society, is someone who then for our purpose has the right to tell those in the society how they are to live in that society in order to achieve the purpose for which that society has been instituted.”

Fr. Hardon also discusses the respective roles of the intellect and the will in obedience. In this regard, he states, “Both the intellect and the will play roles in the act of obedience. But for our purpose the will of the one commanding is accepted first of all by the mind. The mind must recognize in the will of the one commanding the authority to which then my will should submit and then my mind, having recognized that this person has the right to tell me what it should do. And then my will if it wants to, and the will is free, if it wants to, it will then conform to the will of the one who gives.” Then he goes to distinguish between material and formal obedience.

Material obedience: Material obedience means that one carries out the external action that he or she is told to do; in other words one does what he or she is told to do. However, besides material there is also formal obedience.

Formal obedience: Formal obedience means that one not only externally do what he or she is told to do, but internally he or she submits his or her will to the will of the one in authority making the command. In other words, Fr. Hardon states, “I not only perform the action but I perform the action precisely because I am told to do so by legitimate authority.” To put it another way, the will of the one being obedient is in harmony with the will of the one making the command. The kind

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of obedience discussed so far is obedience to human beings who are ultimately invested with divine authority.

Those who believe in God want to obey him

Fr. Hardon asserts that every sane person who believes in God wants to obey God. The trial is in obeying a human being who is vested with divine authority. No one has the right to be obeyed unless his authority is vested with divine authority. However, in today's society, he claims the deepest problem facing people who believe in God and who know his laws are told to obey human authority that is overtly and openly contrary to the divine law. He reveals:

Over the years I've been telling one audience after another. The days of America are numbered. They are numbered. Either those in authority in our society wake up, realize and then bend their minds and wills to the laws of God or . . . the society is doomed. Thus the laws on abortion or sodomy are notorious. The future of any society, and I repeat our society, depends on that society's authorities . . . being obedient to the laws of God. Even then this means not obeying human laws which are contrary to the laws of God . . . Not only is human authority limited by the supreme authority of God Himself but human authority in human society is also limited by higher human authority. Those in authority are themselves subject, subject to someone having authority over them.

In modern society the highest authority is usually not a king or a dictator of some sort, but the will of the people, otherwise known as modern democracy. Fr. Hardon warns us that no democracy can survive if it becomes less and less Christian. He emphatically states that "no human society can survive unless it is subject to and agrees with the teaching and the mind of the Son of God become man. That society is as we say self-destructive." The laws of the United States and other western societies are replete with laws contrary to God's will. St. Thomas Aquinas said something to the effect that any law contrary to the law of God is no law at all, and that it would be sinful for anyone to obey it.

How Christ elevated obedience

Jesus Christ elevated obedience to a higher order by providing the grace needed to be obedient. We must remember that sin came into the world by the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, to the Father's will. Jesus came into the world to save us by his obedience to the Father's will. This is why he has been called the New Adam. In Fr. Hardon's words, "God became man to expiate the disobedience and for that expiation He provided the means for those who believe in Him to be obedient."

How did Christ who is God Incarnate elevate obedience? To do so, he provided seven things:

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1. **First**, he provided the grace needed to practice obedience in a way and to a depth and to an extent that was never possible under the old law of the Israelites.
2. **Second**, he created the supernatural society of the Church which he vested with a share of his own divine authority to lead human beings to the salvation and sanctification. Fr. Hardon informs us:

[I]n the Old Testament there just did not exist a society whose teaching and whose laws and whose governance as we call it was assured constant divine enlightenment and constant divine support for both its teaching and its laws. That took place only when God became man, and to be more specific that took place only at the moment that God become man died on the cross. In other words it took the obedience of the God man to bring the Church into existence, which church then would be Christ on earth telling the followers of Christ what to do, how to do it, and why. But much more important, providing the members of the society founded by Christ with the light and strength they need to practice obedience.

3. **Third**, he lived a life of perfect obedience to teach us how we are to obey by following his example.
4. **Fourth**, he did so by dying on the cross to expiate disobedience and thus enable us to reach heaven in spite of our sins of disobedience.
5. **Fifth**, he did so by instituting the Church to give us the sure guidance we need for knowing who to obey, how to obey, and why. The main reason we should be obedient is out of love for him.
6. **Sixth**, he did so by instituting the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist to enable us to live lives of obedience patterned after his own obedience even to the cross.
7. **Seventh**, he did so by instituting within the Church societies for the express purpose of having his members practice obedience beyond what is binding on all the rest of Christianity.

Lord Jesus, you became man to practice obedience. That is why you assumed a human nature so that you might have a human will so that you might obey human authority out of love for your Father and out of love for us. Enlighten our minds, dear Lord, to see that obedience is what makes us most like you here on earth. Because only through obedience will we see your face through all eternity. Amen.

Acts forbidden by the Fourth Commandment

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By children

1. Not paying due respect to their parents, or by despising them either in their hearts or actions.
2. By not loving them, but wishing their death, or some misfortune; or by forsaking them in their necessities.
3. By not cheerfully obeying them; or by obeying them in things unlawful.
4. By and resisting their corrections.
5. By unnecessarily upsetting them and not taking care to pacify them.
6. By not executing their last will and testament, or by delaying to do so.
7. Failure to carry out the last will of deceased parents.
8. Serious failure to care for aged parents.
9. Serious neglect of the duties of one's state in life.
10. Serious disrespect for or disobedience to parents, superiors or authorities.
11. Wishing death or evil on parents.

By parents not discharging their duty towards their children.

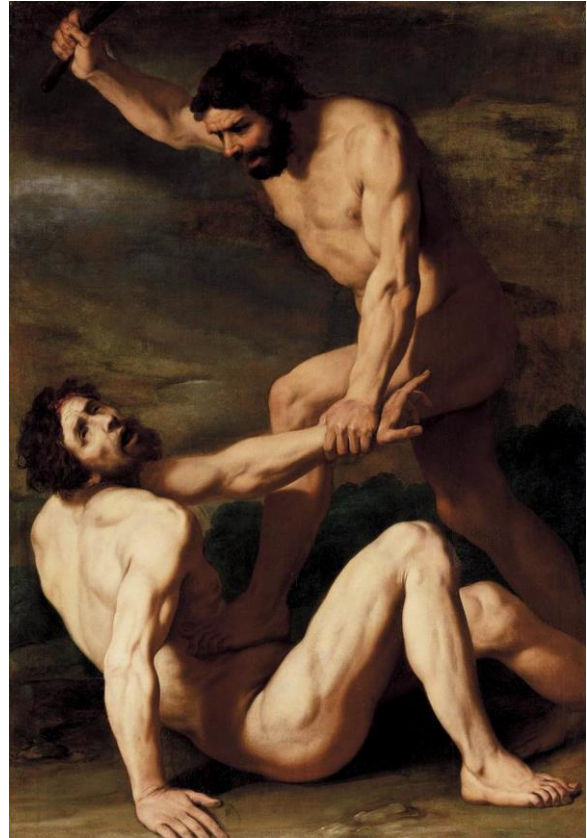
1. In not loving them, and supplying their corporal necessities.
2. In not being careful of their salvation.
3. In not correcting them when it is necessary; in flattering their passions, or indulging their evil inclinations.
4. In treating them with too much severity.
5. In not setting a good example for them.
6. In forcing them in the choice of their state in life.
7. Failure to baptize children in a reasonable time (within a few months) after birth.
8. Serious neglect of the religious education or upbringing of children.
9. Abuse or serious neglect of children.

V. The Fifth Commandment

You shall not kill.

The killing of an innocent person is a violation of the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts. We just instinctively know that it is wrong to take another person's life without just cause. We don't want anyone to kill us, or even injure us; consequently, reason should tell us that we shouldn't kill or injure anyone else. However, because of our fallen nature, humans have all too often not abided by this law over the millennia, so to make it perfectly clear, God revealed through the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue that to take another person's life is contrary to his will.

The twentieth century was the most homicidal in the history of humankind. War and genocide left hundreds of millions dead and legalized abortions killed countless unborn babies. War, genocide, and abortion have continued unabated in the 21st Century. And this doesn't include the tens of thousands of murders committed each year in this country alone. Moreover, euthanasia and infanticide are becoming legally accepted ways to get rid of "burdensome" people. We have created in this country what Pope John Paul II called a Culture of Death.



Cain killing his brother Abel was the first recorded murder in history. Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (Genesis 4:8).

Catholics are called upon to foster a Culture of Life. In fact, the Catholic Church is the only international organization in the world today that defends human life from conception to natural death. Fr. Hardon gives us three reasons the Catholic Church has always defended human life at all of its stages, which are as follows:

1. Human Life is sacred because it comes from God: Humans were created in God's very image and likeness. God placed the first humans in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it (Genesis 2:15). Originally God created our first parents and all of their descendants to be members of his family. They and their descendants were to be God's adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. God's intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever. They and all of their children were to be the Father's heirs. God knows us so well

that he even knows us by name and counts the number of hairs on each of our heads (Matthew 10:30). Because humans are God's children, created in God's very image and likeness, they inherently possess inestimable worth, and no one has the right to take human life except God himself.

2. The Church has always taught that God created humans to know, love, and serve him so they could be happy with him in Heaven forever. Fr. Hardon says that the preposition here is that humans exist for God; therefore, no one has the right to deprive anyone of his or her life. St Augustine wrote in his *Confessions* that God made us for himself and we will not rest until we rest in him. He says that "God has a right to have children to be born . . . He determines whether the children are going to be conceived and He has the right to have those children to be born. If they die before birth that's up to Him. But no human being can interfere with that right of God already nine months in the womb. Then being born. God has the right to have the children reach the age of reason and discretion." He continues:

Already in the womb the mind is being enlightened by the sense experiences of that unborn child. Moreover, God is glorified not only by the human beings as individuals, He is also glorified by the loving care, the solicitude, the generous self-sacrifice of other people. God alone has the right to have people to grow to maturity. God alone has the right to have people, no matter what their age or condition may be, God alone has the right to call a person from this life to the life to come. It is His life. Let us repeat what is God's right in our present reflection: it is the right to be glorified by human beings and, I repeat, by themselves and by those who may care for them, live with them and endure them. Not only caring for them before they are born, but caring for them in, let's say, in their old age. Care for them by carrying them. No matter what state of body or mind those people may be.

3. Finally, human life is Sacred because it is destined to be united in eternity with God. God sent his only begotten son into the world to become one of us, thus elevating our human nature, by grace, to the divine level. He came to share in our humanity so we could share in his divinity as his brothers and sisters and as adopted children of his Father.

As we shall see when we discuss the Sermon on the Mount below, Jesus extended the 5th Commandment to include not only acts of violence that leads to death, but even thoughts that lead to death. This would include thoughts of anger, envy, lust, greed, and the like that lead to violence and result in death.

There are many other aspects of the Fifth Commandment that we could look at here, but I will mention only one more, and that is the case of justifiable homicide. We all have a right to our lives; consequently we have a right, even a duty, to protect ourselves and others from those who would harm or kill us. Furthermore, law enforcement officers have the duty to protect the public from those who would take human life. Moreover, soldiers have the duty to protect the lives of

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their countrymen in a just war when enemies threaten their lives. However, we should never use any more force than is necessary to secure our lives and others.

Fr. Hardon reminds us:

Never in the history of the world has there been more need to believe in the fifth commandment of God than today. The simple imperative, "Thou shall not kill" was already broken at the dawn of human history. Cain murdered his brother Abel out of envy. So the story of the human race goes on. One book of the Old Testament after another, and often one chapter within each book after another, describes sometimes in vivid detail the animosity, the jealousy, the ambition, pride and the hatred that resulted in the killing of innocent people. Absolutely speaking, the unjust killing of an innocent person is knowable by the unaided reason alone.

Murder is contrary to the natural law if by natural law we mean something by which the unaided human mind, reflecting on human nature, can logically conclude that something that is either proscribed or, in this case, forbidden. We don't want anyone killing or maiming us, so it is natural that others don't want us to kill or maim them. We can know this even without God having told us.

However, humans don't always get it right, because of our fallen human nature. With respect to this matter, Fr. Hardon says:

[O]ver the centuries, the reason was blinded so that by the time of Moses, God, having chosen His chosen people, decided to reveal to them beyond what they could know and should have known by reason alone. To reveal in what we call the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue, that to take another person's life is contrary to the will of GOD. Therefore, and this is a crucial . . . we need faith in God's revealed word and here in God's commandments that, what rationally we should know without God having revealed it."

There is a direct correlation between the loss of respect, let alone reverence, for human life on the one hand, and the decline in the belief in God on the other. Fr. Hardon states emphatically that "Only faith can bring back a blinded world to some semblance of sanity. If there is one towering proof of the loss of faith in God and even denying God authority in our lives, it is the spectacle of willful homicide that characterizes our age." The twentieth century, during which faith in God all but vanished in many parts of this world, proved to be the most homicidal in the history of humankind. It has been estimated that more people were murdered by various forms of genocide during that bloody time than all of the rest of the history put together. Estimates of those murdered by Nazi Germany have been as high as twenty million people; of communist Russia thirty million, and communist China fifty to sixty million. Add in the genocidal murders of millions in Armenia and Rwanda and elsewhere, the toll reaches incalculable heights. And that doesn't even count the many millions killed by abortion, which is legalized by most so-called civilized societies.

The murder of "unwanted" persons is practiced and approved by once civilized nations. In addi-

tion to abortion, which is nothing more than legalized murder, infanticide and euthanasia are rapidly becoming common practice. Moreover, contraception is ubiquitous and gay-lesbianism is considered a natural relationship. A culture of death has descended upon much of the world. God created us for himself, and Fr. Hardon insists that “God alone then has a right to determine who will be conceived and who will be born. Only He has a right to determine how long a person is to live in this life. Because . . . our lives on earth are a precondition many times over for that eternal life with God for which we were made.” He closes his discussion of this topic by saying:

Only God then has a right to determine when each person has the right to enter eternity, because God is glorified not only in our knowledge, love and service of Him in this life but God is also glorified by our love and praise of Him in eternity. And other things being equal, if a person is serving God, the longer that person serves God, the greater glory that person will give God through all eternity. In many ways the worst evil of willful homicide is the crime of blasphemy, denying God the glory as the creator to the human race He has the right to.

The Fifth Commandment and Anger

Our Lord Jesus Christ elevated the Fifth Commandment when he said during the Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny. (Matthew 5:21-26).

Jesus came to fulfill the law, not to destroy it, for as he said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” (Matthew 17-18). In other words, he came to complete or perfect the law, something only God could do. According to Fr. John Hardon, to make the connection between the Old and the New Testament, “St Matthew went to great pains to recall the Sermon on the Mount, with its studied contrast with the ethics of the Old Law or, at least of most Jews at the time of Christ. Jesus began by insisting that he did not come to destroy the Law of the Prophets, but to fulfill. Then he proceeded to lay down a standard of morality that marked for all time the cleavage with former days, and the fulfillment of a long-awaited holy One who would sanctify those who believed in his name.”

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What Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount was to emphasize and elaborate on the commandments of love found in the Mosaic Law, love of God and neighbor. The first three commandments of the first tablet, are oriented to love of God and the seven of the second tablet refer to love of neighbor. Fr. Hardon goes on to say, “Writing for the Jews, Matthew synthesized the Master’s teachings in the eight Beatitudes and climaxed them in the Lord’s Prayer. Taken together, these norms of conduct introduced a new dimension into human culture and, quite alone, warrant the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth professed to be more than a human legislator.”

Old Testament Law (The Torah)

The Law is one of the most fundamental concepts in the Bible. In the Old Testament it means the Law of Moses as found in the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This is known as the Torah in Hebrew and the Pentateuch in Greek. Essentially the Law is the requirement for the Israelites to fulfil their covenant with God. In return for obeying the Law, they were rewarded with many descendants, land, peace, and prosperity. When they broke the Law, they were punished by war, famine, disease, natural disasters, and the like. The Ten Commandments are the heart of the Law, but in addition, in order to maintain their chosen status with God and to remain separated from all other peoples, the Israelites were required to abide by hundreds of laws regarding ritual purity, diet, liturgical rites, sabbatical practices, and the like. These laws were intended to help the Israelites be a holy nation and to set them apart from all other peoples who worshipped idols and practiced all sorts of immoral behaviors. There were 613 laws of these types of laws called the Mitzvot. In addition there were hundreds, even thousands of interpretations of these laws called the Mishnah. The Mishnah has been defined as “An early written compilation of Jewish oral tradition, the basis of the Talmud.” One scholar has said that the “Mishnah teaches the oral traditions by example, presenting actual cases being brought to judgment, usually along with the debate on the matter and the judgment that was given by a wise and notable rabbi based on the rules, Mitzvot, and spirit of the [Torah].” In other words, it is a collection of existing traditions, applications, and interpretations of the Law.

The *Catechism* does an excellent job explaining the Old and New Law, the relation between them, and how the New fulfills the Old. In this regard, it states:

God, our Creator and Redeemer, chose Israel for himself to be his people and revealed his Law to them, thus preparing for the coming of Christ. The Law of Moses expresses many truths naturally accessible to reason. These are stated and authenticated within the covenant of salvation (No.1961) The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. Its moral prescriptions are summed up in the Ten Commandments. The precepts of the Decalogue lay the foundations for the vocation of man fashioned in the image of God; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it. The Decalogue is a light offered to the conscience of every man to make God’s call and ways known to him and to protect him against evil (No.1962).

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Another way of putting this is that the commandments of the Old Law, the Ten Commandments, are simply the codification or writing down of the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts.

Why was the Old Law imperfect; in other words why did it need fulfilling? The *Catechism* explains this nicely where it states:

According to Christian tradition, the Law is holy, spiritual, and good, yet still imperfect. Like a tutor it shows what must be done, but does not of itself give the strength, the grace of the Spirit, to fulfill it. Because of sin, which it cannot remove, it remains a law of bondage. According to St. Paul, its special function is to denounce and disclose sin, which constitutes a 'law of concupiscence' in the human heart. However, the Law remains the first stage on the way to the kingdom. It prepares and disposes the chosen people and each Christian for conversion and faith in the Savior God. It provides a teaching which endures for ever, like the Word of God (No. 1963).

The *Catechism* also tells us that the Old Law is a preparation for the Gospel. In this regard, it states:

The Law is a pedagogy and a prophecy of things to come. It prophesies and presages the work of liberation from sin which will be fulfilled in Christ: it provides the New Testament with images, 'types,' and symbols for expressing the life according to the Spirit. Finally, the Law is completed by the teaching of the sapiential books and the prophets which set its course toward the New Covenant and the Kingdom of heaven (No. 1964).

Is it correct to say that the Old Law was written on tablets of stone, whereas the new Law is written on the human heart?

The New Law: The Law of Love: Jesus maintained the Law of the Old Testament, but refined and perfected it in many ways. His emphasis is on the Law of Love, the love of God and neighbor. The first three of the Ten Commandments relate to our love of and obligation to God, whereas the second seven relate to the love of and obligation to our neighbors. The *Catechism* states on this matter:

The Law of the Gospel 'fulfills,' refines, surpasses, and leads the Old Law to its perfection. In the Beatitudes, the New Law fulfills the divine promises by elevating and orienting them toward the 'kingdom of heaven.' It is addressed to those open to accepting this new hope with faith—the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the pure of heart, those persecuted on account of Christ and so marks out the surprising ways of the Kingdom (No. 1967).

In regard to Jesus' New Law of Love, the *Catechism* says:

The New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural and revealed. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon

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on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit and through him it becomes the interior law of charity: "I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my laws into their hands, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." . (No. 1965) The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful through faith in Christ. It works through charity; it uses the Sermon on the Mount to teach us what must be done and makes use of the sacraments to give us the grace to do it: If anyone should meditate with devotion and perspicacity on the Sermon our Lord gave on the Mount, as we read in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, he will doubtless find there ... the perfect way of the Christian life This sermon contains . . . all the precepts needed to shape one's life (No. 1966).

With respect to the fulfillment of the Law, the *Catechism* states:

The Law of the Gospel fulfills the commandments of the Law. The Lord's Sermon on the Mount, far from abolishing or devaluing the moral prescriptions of the Old Law, releases their hidden potential and has new demands arise from them: it reveals their entire divine and human truth. It does not add new external precepts, but proceeds to reform the heart, the root of human acts, where man chooses between the pure and the impure, where faith, hope, and charity are formed and with them the other virtues. The Gospel thus brings the Law to its fullness through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity (No. 1968).

The Old Law was observed out of fear, whereas the New Law is to be observed out of love of God and neighbor. Regarding this, the *Catechism* says:

The New Law is called a law of love because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear; a law of grace, because it confers the strength of grace to act, by means of faith and the sacraments; a law of freedom, because it sets us free from the ritual and juridical observances of the Old Law, inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity and, finally, lets us pass from the condition of a servant who 'does not know what his master is doing' to that of a friend of Christ—'For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you'— or even to the status of son and heir (No.1972).

The question has been asked: Why didn't God institute the New Law of Love immediately at the beginning of time? Rev. Brian Mullady, O.P., who was chair of the theology faculty at Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut and now teaches in California tells us that God didn't give the new law in the beginning "because man had to be prepared to receive grace by realizing his dependence on God. This preparation of the human race was progressive. Nothing in nature is immediately brought to perfection and the same is true of the life of grace, which builds on nature. Had God offered grace to men as soon as the sin was committed, they would not have accepted it because they would not have understood their need for grace, their need to surrender to Him." It is correct to say that the Old Law was for people who thought like children, whereas the New Law was for people who are asked to think like adults.



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Fr. Mullady says regarding this:

The Old Law and the New Law are not two essentially different laws, but two stages in the same law. They are related like the plant to the rose or child to adult. The one is an imperfect stage of the other. Both are oriented to charity, but the Old Law could not in itself give this charity, though it was perfect for its time and place. The Old Law instructs us like children; the New Law like adults. For this reason, there were many temporal punishments and promises given under the Old Law. The New Law on the other hand is a law of Love. It is grace itself and motivates people as spiritual adults.

As we discuss in some detail in our section of this website on the Old Testament, the Old Law contained 613 precepts divided into, 248 commands and 365 prohibitions according to the authorities at the time of Jesus. Fr. Mullady tells us that it contained so many precepts “because it instructed people like children who need constant reminders.

The New Law can be realized only by God’s grace: For this reason, the New Law is more difficult to live than the Old Law. Fr. Mullady in this regard states:

Though the Old Law had many precepts, in itself it did not give the grace to live them properly. Since the New Law gives this grace, it demands that what it commands and forbids be done from the right interior intention. The person who acts according to the New Law must perform what-ever works he performs from spontaneous joy and free internal love born from the supernatural perspective of life according to the Holy Spirit. The interior hardship, which the New Law demands, can only be borne with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who supports us with His presence and power. In this sense, the New Law is much more difficult to live than is the Old Law.

St. Paul says that Christians were not under or subject to the Law or Torah. What does this mean? That Christians have to obey the law? What he meant was that Christians are not required to abide by most of the hundreds of laws regarding ritual purity, diet, liturgical rites, sabbatical practices, and the like. Even though St. Paul spoke often about Christians not being under the Law of Moses, he didn’t mean that they were free from observing the Ten Commandments and the many commandments of the Mitzvot that were related to them. He was referring to laws dealing with ritual purity, dietary regulations, Jewish liturgy, ritual, and temple sacrifices, some of the sabbatical laws, and above all the requirement that men had to be circumcised. In fact Jesus refined and perfected the Ten Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, for he came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).

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Jesus was equating himself with the God of the Old Testament when he said he came to fulfill the law. Fr. Hardon says in this regard:

The logic behind this conclusion is clear. Jesus explicitly raised the demands of the Mosaic Law, known to have been given by Yahweh. He thereby equated himself with the Lord of the Old Testament, because in his own name, and without apology, he proclaimed such drastic revision of Judaic morality that even after twenty centuries, the Jewish code does not recognize the change, e.g., in the dissolubility of marriage and the right to remarriage after divorce.

Moreover, Jesus explained the Law by adding to it, such as saying, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28), or “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment (Matthew 5:21-22), or “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). One of the reasons the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy was his appearing to change or add to the Law, which, of course, only God can do.

You might wonder why Jesus proclaimed a higher standard of conduct than had the Law and the Prophets. On this matter Fr. Hardon says:

[P]roclaiming a higher standard of conduct would have been meaningless unless those for whom it was intended were assured the moral strength to carry it into effect. At this point, all of Christ's references to himself as the source of grace and moral power come into play—synthesized in the declaration, ‘Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy, and my burden light (Matthew 11:28-30).

In other words, humans can achieve the higher standard only with the help of God's grace, whose source is the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ to help us achieve holiness and live virtuous lives. The Israelites under the Old law were not held to as high a standard of moral conduct, because they didn't have the aid of the sacraments.

This then means that we need God's grace to live holy and virtuous lives in accordance with the New Law of Love! It is only with God's grace—that is his life and presence within us—that we can live holy and virtuous lives in accordance with the New Law of Love. Fr Mullady makes this quite clear where he states:

For this reason, the New Law is more difficult to live than the Old Law is. Though the Old Law had many precepts, in itself it did not give the grace to live them properly. Since the New Law gives this grace, it demands that what it commands and forbids be done from the

right interior intention. The person who acts according to the New Law must perform whatever works he performs from spontaneous joy and free internal love born from the supernatural perspective of life according to the Holy Spirit. The interior hardship, which the New Law demands, can only be borne with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who supports us with His presence and power. In this sense, the New Law is much more difficult to live than the Old Law is.”

If the sacrifices of the Old Testament didn't confer grace, how were those under the Old Law saved? We think that John 3:16 applies to every human being that has ever lived, is living, and will ever live, which says: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” St. Paul says in Romans 3:30 that “Since God is one; . . . he will justify the circumcised (meaning the Jews) on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised (meaning the Gentiles) through their faith.” To believe means to have faith, so the Israelites were saved by believing in the promise of a Messiah and in living their lives in accordance with God's Law as found in the Torah. The Gentiles or non-Jews were or can be saved by believing that there is a God of some sort and that they want to please him or them by doing what they consider to be his will. Both Jews and Gentiles before and after the Incarnation and Redemption can be saved by baptism of desire—that if they knew that the Catholic Church is the one established by Jesus Christ—they would desire to be members. God could apply the merits of his son's death on the cross in advance of the Incarnation, because he is all powerful and lives in the eternal present beyond and above time and space.

How God elevated the Old Law precept of charity

Fr. Hardon tells us that the most explicit statement in the Old Testament on the practice of charity towards others is found in the book of Leviticus 19:18 that states: “You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.” By neighbor is meant “your brother” or “your fellow countrymen”. Jesus not only respected the Old Testament precept, but repeated it, but “raised it to a love that had never been commanded by God on the human race; never before.” Fr. Hardon says although there was a precept of charity already in the Old Law, Jesus elevated it in four ways: by elevating the norm; elevating the means; elevating the scope; and elevating the purpose of charity.

- 1. Elevation of the Norm:** Jesus told the disciples at the last supper, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). Fr. Hardon says that this commandment is “so new that it identifies the New Testament in practice, the New Testament in faith, believing that God became man. But the New Testament in practice is Christ's commandment to love.” The old commandment says to love others as you love yourself. However, the problem with this is that many if not most people don't genuinely love themselves. Fr. Hardon states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that basically there are two kinds of love: The love of concupiscence, or self-interested love, meaning that another is loved for one's own sake as something useful or

pleasant to the one who loves; the love of friendship meaning “selfless love of another for that person's own sake, for his or her good, to please him or her; it is the love of benevolence.”

Jesus apparently had the second type of love in mind when he said to love others as I have loved you. The former love is a selfish love, a “self-calculating love, because the satisfaction is derived from self-interested love, not for the sake of the loved one. Jesus’ love for us is of the latter type, which is love for the sake of the loved one. This makes it a tall order for us to fulfill, because we can love others only to the extent that we genuinely love ourselves, that is, to have respect for our own person as created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Christ. Many if not most people really don’t love themselves very well if at all, which makes it difficult to love others for their own sake. Besides, how can we possibly love others as Jesus who is God loves us?

Fr. Hardon gives us some wise advice on how to love our neighbor as Jesus does, i.e., divinely or supernaturally. But we can’t do this by our own native human powers. He reminds us that this can be done only with divine grace and “To sacrifice ourselves for the one that we claim to love.” He says “It is nothing less than loving others with no expectations of self-benefit in return.”

- 2. Elevation of the Means:** Having elevated the norm, Jesus had to provide us with the means to achieving it, which is divine grace. This is why Jesus provided us with the sacraments as the means with which to give us the ability to love our neighbor as he has loved us, especially grace obtained from the Eucharist. According to Fr. Hardon, it is only with divine grace that we have “the power of loving others with sacrificial, selfless charity.” The Eucharist—as we explained above in this essay on the sacraments—is not only the source and summit of our faith, but is also a sacrament from which we attain divine grace needed to love others, as well as a sacrifice with which we can unite ourselves to Jesus’ sacrifice making it possible even, in Fr. Hardon’s words, “to patiently endure and love the one or the ones who cause us suffering.”
- 3. Elevation of the Scope:** The Old Testament precept of charity in Leviticus is “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18). The neighbor in the Old Testament law was one’s kindred, those to whom one was related in some way by family bonds or ethnicity, or ones who are friendly. What Jesus did was to expand the love of kindred to include not only one’s kindred and those friendly, but also we are to love strangers. This is what the parable of the Good Samaritan is all about (Luke 10:35-37). The significance of the parable is that the Samaritans were strangers, even considered enemies to the Jews. Fr. Hardon points out that Jesus elevated the scope or the object of the practice of charity “By telling us kinship, friendship, relationship is not the New Testament norm for loving others. Before God no one is a stranger. God puts ‘strangers’ into our lives.” Jesus’ elevation of the scope of charity goes even farther than this; he extended love to include even our enemies, those who might even hate us. He tells us to “Do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27), and

to “Pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

- 4. Elevation of the Purpose:** The Old Testament purpose was to put one’s love of God into practice by loving others. However its scope was limited compared to what Jesus did to elevate the command to love others. Jesus elevated the goal of charity in order to form a communion of love—the Church. Fr. Hardon states regarding this, “We know . . . as different and diverse and desperate as Christ’s followers would be and are, they were nevertheless becoming one body by their mutual, reciprocal, communal love for one another.” According to Fr. Hardon a second reason for Jesus elevating the commandment of love beyond anything conceivable in the Old Testament is “to witness to the world that God, who is love, became man.” Moreover, “He enables those who believe in Him to love one another with a selfless love that only His grace could make possible . . . and His grace . . . make enjoyable, loving unlovable people.” He continues:

So true was this, and continues to be that the toughest charity of the early Christians was the principle magnet which attracted the brutal, selfish, cruel pagan world of the Roman Empire of Christianity. And the phrase we read you all memorized, the pagan said . . . “See how these Christians love one another” Over the centuries this has been . . . one of the main signs of the true Church. Those who belong to the Church loved, and love one another. A mutual love is the mark of the Church’s creditability That is why God became man, and is on earth with us as man, to provide us with the power we don’t have of ourselves to love one another as He has loved us.

How we are to profit from our tendency to anger

The Fifth Commandment listed in the Book of Exodus 20:13 of the Old Testament states “You shall not kill. Jesus elevated the Fifth Commandment by saying in the Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny (Matthew 5:21-26).

What is anger? Fr. Hardon defines anger in *New Catholic Dictionary* as “An emotional sense of displeasure and usually antagonism, aroused by real or apparent injury. The anger can be either

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passionate or nonpassionate, depending on the degree to which the emotions are excited, strongly in one case and mildly in the other.” He says that as understood by the Church, “anger is the inordinate desire for revenge; it is an emotional sense of displeasure and usually of antagonism aroused by real or apparent injury. Moreover, anger can be deep and strong yet not arouse the emotions, or conversely they can be powerfully aroused. He says, “People can be livid with anger and remain as cool as a piece of ice. Anger is deep and the church wisely distinguished between what she calls passionate emotional and dispassionate anger.” Anger is considered one of the Capital Sins or vices if it is habitual.

Fr. Hardon claims that there are several reasons Jesus elevated the Fifth Commandment

1. **First**, the Old Testament, precepts forbade actually killing someone, whereas Jesus prohibits even being unjustly angry with someone.
2. **Second**, the Old Testament precept centers on the external crime of murder, whereas Jesus concentrates on the internal passion which is at the root of murder. One angry with another could lead to actually harming that person physically in some way, including killing him.
3. **Third**, the Old Testament forbids the killing of an innocent person, whereas Jesus forbids that we even use of offensive language against someone whom we dislike, who has offended us, or with whom we are even irritated. Fr. Hardon reminds us that at the heart of anger is vengeance, and we are all prone to vengeance. Jesus is saying that we can commit murder with our speech, because it can lead to violence, even death.
4. **Fourth** the Old Testament forbids outright murder, whereas Jesus prescribes reconciliation with those whom we are angry, even to the point of leaving the gift on the altar to become reconciled with one’s neighbor first, then return to the altar (Matthew 5:24).. This requires a lot of humility, of meekness (Matthew 11:20), which are among the highest of Christian virtues. Fr. Hardon states that “meekness is humility in practice.”

The Fifth Commandment is a prohibition from the Old Testament forbidding murder, whereas the New Testament forbids unjustified, uncontrolled anger.

Righteous anger or Justifiable indignation

There are circumstances when anger is righteous or justifiable. By righteousness is meant something that is morally right or justifiable. Righteous anger or indignation arises from an outraged sense of justice or morality. It is permissible, even laudable, when accompanied by a reasonable desire to inflict justifiable punishment. Jesus himself was filled with righteous anger against the merchants and money changers who had desecrated the house of God. However, Fr. Hardon tells us that “such anger is allowable only if it tends to punish those who deserve punishment, accord-

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ing to the measure of their guilt, and with the sincere intention to redress what harm may have been done or to correct the wrongdoer. Otherwise the anger is sinfully excessive.” The condition under which anger is justifiable is when it isn’t the result of hatred and isn’t a desire for revenge. He says anger is justifiable “when the reason or grounds for the indignation is or are justified and where the indignation is consistent with the evil that provokes the anger.”

The effects of anger

According to Fr. Hardon, six effects have been identified by Catholic moral theologians with anger. They are as follows:

1. **Indignation** is the internal reaction to something provocative that someone has said or done to offend us. It is an emotion deep down inside us that, given our fallen human nature, is spontaneous. It can arise even before we realize it.
2. **Mental disturbance** is a condition in which the mind loses some of its capacity for thinking correctly. Although angry people can think, their thinking isn’t rational.
3. **Uncontrolled speech** is all too often the result of angry people who say things without thinking of the consequences of their remarks. Once something is said in anger, it can never be taken back.
4. **Blasphemy** with respect to anger is the temptation to become angry with God. Fr. Hardon believes that one can see from the works of the atheistic German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche that he hates God.
5. **Abuse** of various sorts is often the result of persons being angry. Fr. Hardon thinks that many abortions are the result of woman who are angry with the father or some other person or situation.
6. **Quarreling and conflict between individuals and even whole nations.** Those quarrels have been not only between individuals, but also between nations. Fr. Hardon comments on how Marx, Marx was a very angry man. Many of those who sought to put into practice his idea of revolution were angry or resentful of those who were more wealthy, powerful, or intelligent than them.

Remedies to anger

Fr. Hardon informs us that if we wish to master the vice of anger, there are six recommendations:

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1. **First**, to see what arouses us to anger. And as far as possible be protected, avoid being unnecessarily exposed to what we may call anger inducing situations.
2. **Second**, immediately recognize that the mind realizes the first rise of anger. Most people wait much too long. By the time they realize with their minds what is going on they may be so aroused, that barring a miracle of grace they just carry through.
3. **Thirdly**, once the mind realizes it is being provoked, we should resist. Reject the first movements, think of something else. Turn your mind to another object; above all, do not dwell on the provocative thought, feeling or emotion.
4. **Fourth**, pray instantly the moment the mind realizes it is being provoked. Have recourse to God's grace by at least a momentary prayer.
5. **Fifth**, cultivate the habit of meditating on Christ's teachings and example. He is our great divine Master who assumed our human nature to teach us, as He told us, to learn meekness whose foundation is humility.
6. **Sixth**, with the help of God's grace, try to see everything as coming from God. Look to the passion of Jesus as a remedy to anger. Fr. Hardon states that "Surely Christ as man had every reason on earth to react against that angry mob who shouted for His crucifixion. But He saw His Father's will.

The Fifth Commandment and Envy

One final matter with respect to anger, the role that envy plays. Not only is anger a root of killing, but equally so is envy. Recall that anger is the inordinate desire for revenge. When someone hurts or offends us, or causes us suffering, humiliation, or pain, our instinctive reaction or urge is to "strike back" in some way.

Fr. Hardon defines envy in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as the:

Sadness or discontent at the excellence, good fortune, or success of another person. It implies that one considers oneself somehow deprived by what one envies in another or even that an injustice has been done. Essential to envy is this sense of deprivation. Consequently it is not merely sadness that someone else has some desirable talent or possession, nor certainly the ambition to equal or surpass another person, which can be laudable emulation. It is not the same as jealousy, which implies an unwillingness to share one's own possessions.

To put it another way, one is envious of things possessed by others, and jealous of things that belong to him. For example, a man is envious for another man's wife, and jealous of other men who he thinks wants his wife.

Fr. Hardon asked three questions about Jesus' teaching on envy? What is envy? What are some of the consequences of envy? And then, what are the remedies for the vice?

1. **First** the most detailed explanation and condemnation of envy occurs in Matthew 20:1-16, which states:

The kingdom of heaven is like a house holder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard, and about the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the market place idle, and he said to them, "Go you also into the vineyard, and I will give you whatever is just." So, they went and again he went out and about the sixth and about the ninth hour, and did as before. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing about and he said to them, "Why do you stand here all day idle?" They said to him, "Because no man has hired us." He said to them, "Go you also into the vineyard." But, when evening had come the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers and pay them their wages beginning with the last and even to the first. Now when they, of the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius, and when the first in their turn came, they thought they would receive more. But they also received each his denarius. And on receiving it they began to murmur against the householder saying, "These last have worked a single hour, and you put them on a level with us who have borne the burden of the day's heat." But answering one of them he said, "Friend I do you no injustice. Did you not agree with me for one denarius? Take what is yours and go. I choose to give to this last, even as to you. Have I not a right to do what I choose, or are you envious because I am generous? Even so, the last shall be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Fr. Hardon follows with his interpretation of what Jesus is telling us in this parable:

The owner of the vineyard hires laborers at different times of the day, to be exact, five different times. Early in the morning, at the third hour, at the sixth hour, at the ninth hour, and then just before sunset at the eleventh hour. Each of the five groups of laborers receives the same wage, a denarius. No labor union in the world would settle for that, except here the employer is God. The owner, how wise of our Lord, the perfect story teller. Christ tells us the owner starts to pay those who worked only one hour. He gives them one denarius, goes down the line (or should we say, goes up the line), when he comes to pay those who had been working all day, to be exact (I counted them) eight hours. That is where the eight hour day started, isn't that good to hear? They couldn't believe it, they put their hand out and they too got one denarius. Understandingly, they complained, "How come we who have sweated all day are getting only as much as those loiterers who put in a measly (and if they are hired at the eleventh hour they probably didn't even put in sixty minutes of work) and they got as much as those who had worked hard all day long. The response of the owner is the response of God. And God is speaking to all of us. "Are you envious because I am generous?"

Now having read this parable and Fr. Hardon's interpretation of it, let's ask again, What is envy?

He says “Envy is sadness, or discontent at the excellence, good fortune or success of another person. Envy implies that I consider myself somehow deprived, but why deprived? Deprived by what I envy in another person, and even, incredibly that an injustice has been done to me, because that person has what I lack, or has succeeded at what I have failed.” He reveal to us that forty-five years in the priesthood have taught that the root cause of most of the conflict among human beings is envy.

- 2. Second,** What are some of the consequences of envy? Fr. Hardon believes that the consequences of envy are past counting, that they are “a summation of all the evils in revealed history.” Envy was even a problem in the Church as early as the first century. St. Clement of Rome, believed to be the fourth pope, in a letter warned the Corinthians “In the name of God, get hold of yourselves. You are envious of one another.” Then he explains it was envy of God that caused the fall of the angels. The devils came into existence through envy and you could not be either more fundamental or more crucially emphatic than that. That is how hell came into being—through envy. And we shouldn’t ever forget that it was envy and pride that was the cause of the fall of our first parents. The devil envied their happiness and played on their pride to seduce them.

The Bible is replete with examples of persons committing heinous acts out of envy: Cain murdered his brother Abel out of envy; Saul tried to murder David out of envy over David’s popularity with the people; envy caused the Scribes and Pharisees to persecute and kill Jesus.

In summary, five consequences of the vice of envy are listed below:

- **First** Envy causes hatred of the person envied, where hatred is the opposite of love. You don’t love those who you envy.
- **Second,** envy arouses criticism of the envied person. Criticism in the mind, criticism in the lips, criticism in speech, criticism in writing.
- **Third,** detraction of the envied person’s character. The envious mind will concoct all kinds of criticisms of the one envied, even to a point where the envious one won’t even realize that he or she is telling a lie.
- **Fourth,** resentment of the envied person’s possession, prosperity, praise or achievement. Envy is at the root of most people’s problems in dealing with others. And most people don’t even know they are envious.
- **Fifth,** one of the consequences of envy is the joy that the envious person has of the misfortunes or adversities of others.

Fr. Hardon closes this topic by stating: All of this, the five principle consequences of envy that have brought, as faith tells us, tragedy first, on the very angels of God who envied their maker; on

the human race through the envy of the evil spirit and among human beings in families. Husband envying his wife, the wife envying her husband. In the Church, the laity envying priests.

3 Remedies to envy is simple—the practice of charity. Fr. Hardon is emphatic when he says that “Charity in the last analysis is THE remedy for envy. But concretely, to cure ourselves of envy, the masters of the spiritual life recommend the following:

- **First** think kindly of the person you are tempted to envy. And for some people this can be their most difficult and demanding mortification. Controlling of our thoughts!
- **Second**, to overcome the vice of envy, act kindly to the person who you are tempted to envy. The key word there is kindly, willingly, generously, lovingly. It is remarkable how differently we can deal with different people. Pardon me, how differently we can deal with different people, how differently we do deal with different people. With some we spontaneously smile.
- **Third** recommended remedy, do good to the person that you are tempted to envy. That is a little more than just acting kindly. You might say to yourself, “What can I possibly do for this person, she’s got everything?” Well, not quite. It may take some, well, some sifting, some self inquiring. And the one thing that every person wants, no matter how gifted, everyone wants to be loved. Everyone? Everyone! Even those who don’t need the good, well, that we want to do for them. Like who? Like God! God needs nothing we can possibly give Him, but He wants us to love Him.
- **Finally**, if we are to conquer the demon of envy in our lives we must cultivate the habit of praying. And this I tell you can be hard, I dare say, even selectively praying for those who I am most inclined because of my fallen human nature to envy.

Acts forbidden by the Fifth Commandment

The Fifth Commandment forbids us to harm the life, either natural or spiritual, of our neighbor as well as of ourselves. It prohibits murder, suicide, unjustified fighting, curses, and scandal. Acts forbidden by the Fifth Commandment include:

1. By anger, quarreling, or threatening, or by injurious or reproachful words, or actions against our neighbors.
2. By revenge, or deliberate thoughts or desires of revenge.
3. By provoking, striking, challenging, wounding, or being the cause of another's death.
4. By bearing malice, refusing to salute or speak to any neighbor out of hatred or aversion, or refusing to be reconciled to him.
5. Murder, homicide or manslaughter.
6. Procurement of an abortion.

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7. Promoting, counseling or paying for an abortion.
8. Knowingly voting for someone who is pro-abortion.
9. Willfully injuring or trying to hurt another person.
10. Willfully leading another into serious sin, because it can kill his soul.
11. Driving dangerously or recklessly.
12. Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
13. Willfully harboring hatred for another.
14. Taking or selling illegal drugs.
15. Willful drunkenness.
16. Self mutilation.
17. Excessive tattoos.
18. Excessive body piercing.
19. Piercing of the nipples or sexual organs.
20. Sterilization
21. Promotion of or involvement in euthanasia.
22. Serious entertainment of suicidal thoughts.
23. Attempting or intending suicide.
24. Willful failure to bury the body or ashes of the dead.
25. Willful engagement in unjust lawsuits.
26. Bigotry (hatred for persons of other races).
27. Intentionally placing temptation before the weak.

VI. The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

Fr. Hardon states, “Over the centuries, there has been no aspect of Christianity that has been more tested, more tried than the Sixth and the Ninth Commandments of the Decalogue. Since the time of Christ, this has been the most contested issue on the moral level of human behavior. If the most sublime feature of Christ’s teaching is His doctrine on charity, His most challenged teaching is on the subject of chastity.”

As will become apparent when we examine the Sermon on the Mount below, the Old Testament understanding of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments of the Decalogue are different than the New Testament. The Sixth Commandment simply declared: “You shall not commit adultery.” And the Ninth Commandment states, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or anything else that belongs to him, including his house, field,

servant, ox, or donkey. In other words, a husband or wife was considered another person’s property just like any other possession and one committed a sin if he or she tried to deprive another of his property. The concept of chastity as it developed among Christians was unknown in the Old Testament times, even among the Jews, for they allowed divorce, remarriage, and even polygamy. In this regard, Fr. Hardon tells us that “Consequently, the Old Testament understanding of adultery, whether actual adultery or adultery by intent, was essentially a sin against justice. Even the ninth commandment forbade the stealing of another person’s spouse by intention. Both Sixth and Ninth Commandments were basically prohibitions of robbery.”

To the contrary, Jesus taught internal chastity, marital indissolubility, and consecrated chastity—especially as found in the Gospel of Matthew where the fullest version of the Sermon on the Mount is found. To get a comprehensive understanding of these three topics would easily take a year of daily study in a course such as our course on Catholic morality at John Paul II Catholic High School. What Jesus was doing, of course, was restoring conditions as they had existed before the Fall.

The Sixth Commandment orders us to be holy in body, conducting ourselves with the greatest respect for our own person and the person of others, as works of God and temples where he dwells with his presence and his grace. The Sixth Commandment forbids impurity of any kind: this means immoral actions, words, looks, books, pictures, and shows.



King David looking lustfully upon Bathsheba. He not only committed adultery with her, but also arranged for her husband Uriah to be sent to the front line of battle to be killed, breaking both the Fifth and Sixth Commandments, for which he was severely punished by God by having his sons to rebel against him. (2 Samuel 11:1-27).

Old Testament understanding of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments

The Catholic Church has remained the one true church that has remained firm in preserving the teaching of Christ on chastity. First, we'll look briefly at the Old Testament understanding of the sixth and ninth commandments of the Decalogue? And then, we'll consider what was Jesus' teaching on these commandments.

The Old Testament understanding: The Sixth Commandment states, "You shall not commit adultery." And the Ninth Commandment, in its longer version, declares, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your heart on his house, his field, his servant, man or woman, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is his."

The interpretation of the Sixth Commandment in the Old Testament assumed that a man's wife was his property. It can't be too heavily emphasized that the Christian concept of chastity was unknown in Old Testament times, not even among the Jews. The ancient Jews allowed divorce, remarriage, and even polygamy. Consequently, the Old Testament understanding of adultery, whether actual adultery or adultery by intent, was essentially a sin against justice. Even the ninth commandment forbade the stealing of another person's spouse by intention. Fr. Hardon informs us that both Sixth and Ninth Commandments were basically prohibitions of robbery. He also tells us that the Protestant understanding of the two commandments is basically the Old Testament understanding, which allows divorce, remarriage, and even polygamy in the case of the early Mormans. What then was Christ's teaching on the Sixth and Ninth Commandments?

New Testament understanding of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments

The teaching of Christ on these two commandments covers three areas of Christian morality. He taught internal chastity, he taught marital indissolubility, and he taught consecrated chastity.

Internal Chastity: While teaching about adultery during his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

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. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna (Matthew 5:27-30).

In this passage, Jesus is contrasting the Old Testament prohibition of adultery in act—an overt, external act—with his own prohibition of even lustful thoughts and desires. This, of course, was never forbidden by the Old Testament. Fr. Hardon states this "is not only the prohibition of coveting someone else's spouse. It is even looking with one's eyes or thinking with one's mind, or desiring with one's will to have sexual experience with someone who is not one's lawfully wedded spouse."

Indissolubility of Marriage: Immediately after clarifying the meaning of adultery, Jesus contrasted the Old Testament teaching on divorce with his own. He says, “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:31-32). In another discussion with the Pharisees who were testing him by asking him “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?” Jesus replied:

Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” They said to him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss [her]?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery” (Matthew 19: 1-9).

That a man could divorce and remarry his wife has always been assumed by Jewish law. The Jews of Jesus’ time had two interpretations of divorce and remarriage: the liberal and the conservative. The liberal interpretation was that a man can put away your wife for any reason. The conservative interpretation was a man had to have good reasons. He might even have to consult his rabbi whether or not he could divorce his wife. Now, Jesus was telling them they had not interpreted the law correctly on this matter, that when two people marry, they must remain together for life. He even went so far to declare that even if one is unfaithful, according to Fr. Hardon, “they may separate, but even though separated, and even the innocent party, even the innocent party in adultery is not allowed by divine law to divorce and remarry.” He continue by saying:

Christ, therefore, as he explained, was restoring the law on monogamy to what it had been, as we may say, before the Fall. We know there had been widespread polygamy already in ancient times. The Jewish law did not even forbid polygamy. Christ, therefore, could not have been more drastic in elevating the Sixth and Ninth Commandments than by restoring monogamy to the human race. And, for the record, the Church teaches that since the time of Christ, polygamy is forbidden to every person in the world, and not only, say, to those who believe in and follow Christ.

So, once He restored monogamy to marriage, again He had no choice in sheer divine justice, except to institute the Sacrament of Matrimony. Why? To provide the married spouses with the grace they would need, and how they would need it to remain faithful to another, just two, until death.

Fr. Hardon asserts that the Church’s teaching, that a sacramental, valid, consummated marriage is not dissoluble by any authority on earth, can be invalidated by any bishop, conference of bishops, or pope. He reminds us that “the most traumatic exercise of papal authority on the indissolubility of a sacramental, valid, consummated marriage, as we all know, was Henry VIII,

as a result of which, not only was England lost to the Catholic Church, but also so many countries that for centuries belonged to Great Britain.” He adds:

[T]he English-speaking world has been especially affected for what happened in the sixteenth century when Henry VIII decided he would be pope in his own country. And the martyrs John Fisher and Thomas More are evidence of the utter incompatibility of believing that . . . a sacramental, valid, consummated marriage is dissolvable and being a Catholic. That is why, for years now, I have been teaching that the Catholic Church will survive only . . . where there are still dioceses, bishops, priests, and the laity who still believe in that uncompromising teaching of Jesus Christ.

Consecrated Chastity: Christ’s third area of teaching on the Sixth and Ninth Commandments is one does not divorce his or her spouse and remarry. Even his disciples questioned this interpretation of the law:

[His] disciples said to him, “If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” He answered, “Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.” (Matthew 19:10-12).

Jesus wanted to make clear that marriage is a holy relationship. It is not, as so often has been claimed over the ages, a concession to human nature, citing St Paul that it is better to marry than burn in Hell (1 Corinthians 7:9). Fr. Hardon says that “for almost five hundred years, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, the very terms unchastity or impurity have left the impression on many people’s minds that there is something inherently wrong or sinful in sexual pleasure.” To the contrary:

The reason why it is forbidden to even deliberately either indulge or arouse sexual pleasure outside of marriage is not because sexual pleasure is inherently wrong. It is . . . because sexual pleasure is holy, but only within the precincts of matrimony. It is, in fact, so holy that to either arouse or indulge that pleasure outside of marriage is profanation of the state, and, for us Catholics, the Sacrament, of Matrimony. Christ, as we have said, elevated marriage to the level of a sacrament. But then, it was to be a sacrament on the conditions that He, who is God, determined that sacrament should be lived, in indissoluble monogamy. But then, once Christ declared that He would provide the grace for His married followers to remain faithful to one another, two in one flesh, until death . . . He instituted the state of consecrated chastity in order to make it plain that the same grace that enables married people to remain faithful to one another until death is the grace that Christ confers on the sum of His followers who even forego marriage.

Fr. Hardon tells that this is the essence of consecrated chastity, which is the sacrifice of marriage. In regard to this he says:

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In other words, marriage is pleasing to God, so pleasing that God became man to institute the sacrament, to ensure that His married believers would remain faithful to one another, and thus to Him, all through life. However, Christ did more, and that's the third and for us, the most sublime teaching of Christ on the Sixth and Ninth Commandment . . . that not only the observance of fidelity in a matrimonial union, but the Sixth and Ninth Commandments also provide for those who have the grace to sacrifice the very state of marriage itself.

Acts forbidden by the Sixth Commandment are as follows:

The Sixth Commandment orders us to be holy in body, conducting ourselves with the greatest respect for our own person and the person of others, as works of God and temples where he dwells with his presence and his grace. The Sixth Commandment forbids impurity of any kind: this means immoral actions, words, looks, books, pictures, and shows. Acts forbidden by the Sixth Commandment include:

1. Adultery
2. Fornication (intercourse prior to marriage)
3. Masturbation or other impure acts with self.
4. Homosexual acts.
5. Using a contraceptive.
6. Dressing or acting in a manner intended to cause arousal in another (spouses excepted).
7. Kissing or touching another passionately for the purpose of arousal (spouses excepted).
8. Allowing another to kiss or touch you in a sexual manner (spouses excepted).
9. Intentionally causing a sexual climax outside of intercourse.
10. Flagrant immodesty in dress.
11. Bestiality (sexual acts with animals).
12. Prostitution
13. Rape
14. In-vitro fertilization or artificial insemination.
15. Surrogate motherhood.
16. Selective reduction of babies in the womb.
17. Types of fertility testing that involve immoral acts.
18. Involvement in or support of human cloning.
19. Willful divorce or desertion.
20. Incest
21. Polygamy or polyandry (many wives/husbands).
22. Cohabitation (living with someone prior to marriage)
23. Destroying the innocence of another by seducing or introducing them to immorality.
24. Lust in the heart ("if I could I would").
25. Transvestitism or cross dressing.
26. In willingly listening to immodest words, discourses, songs, etc

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27. In looking on immodest objects.
28. In reading or keeping immodest books; lending them to others; or neglecting to suppress them when we may.
29. In speaking immodest words.
30. In relating improper stories or wicked actions of ourselves or others.
31. By entertaining impure thoughts willfully and with pleasure.
32. By watching pornography on videos or the Internet

IX. The Ninth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

The Ninth Commandment forbids not only acts of impurity as does the Sixth Commandment, but impure thoughts and desires as well. Impure thoughts and desires are evil in themselves, but are also evil because they all too often lead to action. The Ninth Commandment orders us to practice perfect purity of soul and the greatest respect for family life. Acts forbidden by the Ninth Commandment include:

1. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.
2. Viewing pornography in books, magazines, movies, the internet, etc.
3. Reading sexually explicit materials.
4. Dwelling on impure thoughts or fantasies for the purpose of arousal.
5. Willfully lusting after another.
6. Telling or listening to impure or vulgar jokes or stories.
7. Not trying to control the imagination.
8. Curiosity or playing with temptation.
9. Seeking out or looking at persons or pictures which are immodest.

VII. The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

Jesus elevated the Mosaic Law—the Decalogue—far above what it had been before he became man to teach human beings how to reach Heaven. Fr. Hardon says that “The Church has built on the gospel and developed a profound morality of ownership and poverty that has literally changed the face of the earth.” If there is one thing that Christ brought out plainly it is that human society has inequality. Some people have more of this world’s goods than others. Fr. Hardon identifies three reasons for inequality:

1. God simply gives some people more than others.
2. Some people are more enterprising and energetic than others.
3. There is injustice among human beings.

Depriving others of what they deserve, preventing them from obtaining even what they need, exploiting the work and talents of others, and outright stealing—are all notorious forms of injustice that have become part of world history.

Father warns us not to allow inequality to dominate our thoughts. Otherwise, what others have can become the source of envy. Envy in turn can change covetousness into greed, and greed then leads to all kinds of sin. He says that “The secret of keeping the Seventh Commandment is to observe the Tenth. Either we master our minds from comparing what others have and what we lack, or our hands will seek to appropriate other people’s possessions.” He reminds us how Jesus preached the need for internal detachment from material possessions. He says that detachment means more than not coveting what belongs to someone else, but means not coveting any earthly possession whatsoever. “In Christ’s language”, he says, “We are not to set our hearts on any temporal goods, no matter how lawfully acquired. Our hearts should be set on the treasures of heaven, where neither moth consumes nor thieves can break in and steal.”

Rich and poor alike are called to detachment from the things of this world. St. Teresa of Avila



Dr Samuel Johnson, was an English writer who made lasting contributions to English literature as a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. He was a devout Anglican and committed Tory, and has been described as "arguably the most distinguished man of letters in English history". His biographer and friend James Boswell quoted him as saying in his *Life of Johnson* that “When he leaves our house, let us count our spoons. Of a man who claimed there was no distinction between virtue and vice.” People often put some of their wealth in silver and gold ware in earlier times, so stealing spoons was a significant crime of theft.

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never tired of telling others that to be holy and achieve union with God requires that one be detached from the things of this world and attached to the things that are God's. The rich should be detached by not being proud of their possessions and to look at them as being held in trust. This is true because everything belongs to God and we are but stewards of what belongs to him. We will be judged by how well we can give an accounting of our use of the goods he has given us in the service of others. Those who have much are obligated to share their possessions with those who are poor, and those who are poor should be detached by not envying those who are rich.

Fr. Hardon states that like the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, the Seventh and Tenth not only forbid actually taking another person's property, but even internally desiring to appropriate it. He says:

The reason for both prohibitions is obvious. Before God, sin consists in the will acting contrary to the will of God. There would be no stealing with the hands if there had not first been stealing with the heart. Christ repeated the Seventh Commandment not to steal (Mark 10:19). He also repeated the frequent Old Testament prohibition of fraud. But once again He elevated the Mosaic Law far above what it had been before God became man to teach human beings how to reach heaven. The Church has built on the gospel and developed a profound morality of ownership and poverty that has literally changed the face of the earth.

Control of Covetousness

Fr. Hardon reveals that the secret of keeping the Seventh Commandment is to observe the Tenth. He says, "Either we master our minds from comparing what others have and what we lack, or our hands will seek to appropriate other people's possessions." Jesus taught that best way to control a desire what others have is to detach ourselves from material possessions (Luke 12:13-15). Human desires for possessions is insatiable; we will never have enough power, property, prestige, privileges, or possessions to satisfy us.

According to Fr. Hardon, internal poverty of detachment as proclaimed by Christ, goes beyond the avoidance of covetousness taught in the Commandments. He states, "Detachment means not only not coveting what belongs to someone else: It means not coveting any earthly possession, period. In Christ's language we are not to set our hearts on any temporal goods, no matter how lawfully acquired. Our hearts should be set on the treasures of heaven, where neither moth consumes nor thieves can break in and steal." St. Teresa of Avila never tired of advising others that if they wanted to grow in holiness they would have to detach themselves from the things of this world and attach themselves to things of the next.

- Detachment is to be practiced by everyone who call themselves Christian, the rich and the poor alike. The rich are to be detached by not being proud, and by sharing their possessions with the poor. The poor are to be detached by not envying or worse still, hating

the rich. Jesus did not deny the need for money in this world, but he advised not to let it be your master (Luke 16:9-13).

Stealing and Restitution

There are several words that mean almost the same thing, but they are somewhat different.

- **Theft** is the most general term for taking what belongs to someone else, without the owner's consent.
- **Stealing** is theft but implies that something is taken secretly and not only without the owner's permission, but without his knowledge.
- **Robbery** is also theft, but violence or intimidation is used to force the owner to give up what he possesses.
- **Burglary** is again theft but committed in such a way that the thief breaks in on the owner's premises or property with the intention to steal.
- **Larceny** is theft in which someone's property is removed from the place where it belongs in order to be appropriated by the thief.

Other terms are also used, and the laws of all nations are filled with a variety of terms for unlawfully taking someone else's property. Evidently the Seventh Commandment is frequently broken by many people.

Fr. Hardon states "property cries out for its owner, which means "What has been stolen never really becomes owned by the thief. It belongs to its original possessor, no matter how much or how little the stolen object may be, and no matter how long a time may have elapsed since the thieving took place." He continues, "Always implied is that the owner wants back what was taken; that the stolen object is precious to him; and that he is reasonable in his unwillingness to give up the ownership of what justly belongs to him." Therefore, "restitution of stolen goods is an obligation that follows naturally on stealing. The seriousness of restitution depends on the value of what was stolen; on the desire of the owner to have his property restored; and on the practical difficulty—or even possibility—of restoring the stolen material." He concludes by saying, "So important is restitution, that the willingness to restore what was stolen, or its equivalent, is a condition for having the sin of theft forgiven by God."

Cheating and Gambling

Cheating: There are many different types of cheating. Cheating is actions intended to deceive by trickery or fraud to gain something a person wants. People cheat for many different reasons: to get good grades in school, to win an athletic contest, to obtain a job, to be recognized for something, to win the affection of a mate, or for social standing. Fr. Harding calls cheating a form of stealing to obtain something of material value like property or money. The means used are

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always some kind of fraud. He informs us that cheating is always sinful twice over, because the cheater uses deceit to obtain something that doesn't belong to him, and once again when he deprives others of what belongs to them. As with stealing, cheating requires restitution.

Gambling: Fr. Hardon defines gambling in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “The staking of money or other valuables on a future event, chance, or contingency that is unknown or uncertain to the participants. The essential feature of gambling is wagering, or the act of hazarding as such To gamble is to stake money or some other valuable on chance, or a future event that is unknown or uncertain to those who take part.”

The Catholic Church does not consider gambling in itself sinful, in spite of the evident abuses to which it generally gives rise. Nonetheless, it might become sinful, even seriously sinful, “when it goes to excess that would destroy personal honesty or expose a person to loss so great as to jeopardize society and, above all, his family dependents.” Experience shows that gambling can become an addiction, a case that Fr. Hardon recommends that the person should give up gambling altogether.

Gambling was commonly practiced in pagan Rome. On Calvary after the soldiers had crucified Christ they decided to gamble on who would get the Savior's seamless garment. (John 19:24). Furthermore, the apostles cast lots to choose a replacement for Judas after Jesus had ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:25-26). It was assumed that having asked God to “show us which of these two you have chosen,” the choice of Matthias by lot was really God's choice.

Social Justice

Broadly defined, Fr. Hardon states, “social justice is the virtue that enables us to cooperate with other people in developing a society whose laws and institutions better serve the common good.” In more detail he states in *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:

The virtue that inclines one to co-operate with others in order to help make the institutions of society better serve the common good. While the obligation of social justice falls upon the individual, that person cannot fulfill the obligation alone, but must work in concert with others, through organized bodies, as a member of a group whose purpose is to identify the needs of society, and, by the use of appropriate means, to meet these needs locally, regionally, nationally, and even globally. Implicit in the virtue of social justice is an awareness that the world has entered on a new phase of social existence, with potential for great good or great harm vested in those who control the media and the structures of modern society. Christians, therefore, are expected to respond to the new obligations created by the extraordinary means of promoting the common good not only of small groups but literally of all humanity.

Father says that “the very nature of society requires that individuals work together with others

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Through organized bodies. Otherwise the good achieved will be minimal, and the presence of alien forces may neutralize even the most zealous efforts to practice the works of mercy.”

Prior to Vatican Council II, the Church heavily emphasized personal morality; i.e., moral conduct between individuals with a heavy emphasis on sexual conduct. Personal morality was considered primarily using a natural law philosophy. During and after the council, a personalist philosophy was increasingly used to consider personal morality, especially the personalist philosophy of John Paul II. Overall, this approach helped form the consciences of millions of Catholics in a truly virtuous and holy manner. The biggest weakness of the approach, according to Ralph Cingery in his book *What Went Wrong with Vatican II*, was that there was too little consideration of the social dimensions of morality. By not educating the Catholic laity and priesthood in their moral responsibility to care for the institutions of society as a whole, the Church left the field to the more progressive minded theologians who offered solutions to social problems of a revolutionary nature, all too often of political revolutionary and socialistic nature. All too many priests, and even bishops, got involved in efforts to reform or revolutionize society instead of saving souls.

The Church had long been acutely aware of this threat to the salvation of souls, especially among the working classes during the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Hundreds of millions of families had moved from the countryside of Europe and the United States to seek employment in the rapidly expanding factory system. While living in the countryside, the *noblesse oblige* of the nobility offered them some protection from the vicissitudes of life. But when they took up industrial employment operating in a liberal capitalistic system, there was all too often little or no concern for the welfare of the worker and his family by the industrial employers. Men usually worked for low wages—certainly not what the Church considered a living wage—for excessively long hours, in unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, and with no health or retirement benefits. Frequently, just to make ends meet, the wife also had to take up industrial employment, and even the children sometimes. The theory was that the worker contracted with the employer for employment and the conditions of work, and if he didn't like it he could go elsewhere. Meanwhile, many of the great fortunes of Europe and the United States were made from the sweat and tears of the workers and their families. Due to rampant social injustice, the working classes were rapidly becoming more and more attracted to revolutionary ideas and movements, especially of a socialistic nature. Many were also losing their religious faith, both Catholics and Protestants.

Beginning with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1893, followed by almost all popes since then, the Church has seen serious, even desperate need for social justice to be practiced according to the norms of Catholic Christianity. The rise of atheistic Communism was a warning to Christians to work for a more just distribution of the material possessions of the earth. In 1937, Pope Pius XI wrote in his anti-communist social encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (Latin for Divine Redeemer) that communism is “a system full of errors and sophisms” that “subverts the social order, because it means the destruction of its foundations” as well as removing women from their rightful place in the home.” He goes on to contrast Communism with the *civitas humana* (ideal human civilization), “which is marked by love, respect for human dignity, economic justice, and the rights of workers.” He criticizes industrialists and employers who do not adequately support

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their workers, which creates a climate of discontent and distrust, and tempts them to embrace Communism. He states a just economic and social order can be soundly established only “when it offers to all . . . all those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical science, and the corporate organization of social affairs can give.” It is significant that this document was published just five days after his famous encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (English: With Burning Anxiety) condemning the German Nazi regime and ideology.

The Church has always defended the right of individuals to own property, including their possessions and means of employment. Fr. Hardon says in regard to this matter:

There is a right to private ownership that stems from the natural law. And Marxism, which denies this right, is a philosophy that ignores the spontaneous desire of every person to possess and acquire something as one’s own. But this natural desire may not deny or minimize the social and public character of ownership. [However], private property is not an absolute and unconditional right (of ownership). No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others are lacking the necessities of life (Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, 22-24).

So many social reformers urge that justice be practiced, but they forget that justice alone is not enough. In fact, in the name of justice the worst kind of injustice can be done. In other words, the alleged good to be obtained justifies any means to achieve it, including violence. Regarding this matter, Fr. Hardon states:

Very often programs which start from the idea of justice . . . in practice suffer from distortions, although they appeal to the idea of justice. Nevertheless experience shows that other negative forces have gained the upper hand over justice. Such are spite, hatred and even cruelty . . . The experience of the past and of our own time shows that justice alone is not enough. It can even lead to the destruction of itself, if that deeper power which is love, is not allowed to shape human life (John Paul II, *Encyclical Redemptor hominis*, 12).

The foundation of all social justice is the belief that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. This gives them dignity and equal worth before God, deserving of respect, even reverence.

Elsewhere in this website is a complete discussion of social justice.

Acts forbidden by the Seventh Commandment

The Seventh Commandment orders us to give back the property belonging to others, to repair damages that we are responsible for, to honor debts, and to pay a just wage to working men. The Seventh Commandment forbids damaging our neighbor’s property. This includes thefts, destructive actions, usury, fraud in contracts and in services, and assistance in any such acts. Acts forbidden by the Seventh Commandment include:

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1. Taking another's goods, and to what value.
2. Retaining what we know belongs to another.
3. By denying our debts, or willfully delaying payment, to the detriment of our neighbors.
4. Making unjust bargains or contracts, into which every trade or profession ought to make a strict inquiry.
5. Causing any damage to our neighbors.
6. Putting out false and counterfeit money.
7. Desiring another's property.
8. Not giving alms when necessity requires.
9. Not paying dues to our pastors, or by not contributing to the decent support of religious worship.
10. By simony (selling church offices or property).
11. Stealing a large amount of money or a valuable item.
12. Willfully destroying or defacing another's property.
13. Stealing something consecrated to God or from a holy place.
14. Buying, selling, receiving or concealing items known to be stolen.
15. Willful failure to make restitution.
16. Excessive gambling.
17. Defrauding workers of their wages.
18. Serious failure to fulfill work requirements.
19. Padding expense or per diem accounts.
20. Taking advantage of the poor, simple, inexperienced or less fortunate.
21. Denying help to the poor, needy or destitute when able to help them easily.
22. Defrauding creditors.
23. Bribery or taking bribes.
24. Blackmail
25. Fraud or embezzlement
26. Price fixing
27. Tax evasion
28. Forgery
29. Excessive waste or expense
30. Violating copyrights
31. Pirating computer software
32. Slavery
33. Serious cruelty to animals

X. The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

As with the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, the Seventh and Tenth not only forbid actually taking another person's property, but even internally desiring to have it. Fr. Hardon tells us that the reason for both prohibitions is obvious. He says that, "Before God, sin consists in the will acting contrary to the will of God. There would be no stealing with the hands if there had not first been stealing with the heart."

The Tenth Commandment orders us to be just and moderate in the desire to improve our own condition of life, and to suffer with patience the hardships and other sufferings permitted by the Lord for our good, because we must undergo many trials if we are to enter into the reign of God. The Tenth Commandment forbids the unrestrained desire for riches, without regard for the rights and welfare of our neighbor. Acts forbidden by the Tenth Commandment include:

1. To desire your neighbor's goods.
2. Serious and willful greed or avarice.
3. Intention to steal or destroy the goods of another.

VIII. The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

The main focus of the Eighth Commandment is falsehood that injures one's neighbor. Causing harm to another person's reputation is the special prohibition of this commandment. A person's reputation may be injured in several ways, especially by detraction and calumny or slander.

Detraction and Calumny: Detraction is doing or saying something about a person that is true, but harms his reputation. Calumny or slander is harming a person's reputation by saying or doing something that is a lie.

Fr. Hardon says that detraction is a sin against justice because it deprives a man or woman of what they ordinarily value more than riches, his or her reputation. He refers to Socrates' statement that the way to gain a good reputation is to endeavour to be what you desire to appear. All of this, even more than accumulated wealth, can be destroyed by a single sinful act of detraction.

On the other hand, Calumny or slander is also a deliberate sin against justice, but it is an outright lie about someone's reputation. Fr. Hardon writes in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that it is doubly sinful, because it unjustly deprives one of his good name and in telling an untruth. Since calumny violates justice, it involves the duty of making reparation for the foreseen injury inflicted. Hence the calumniator must try, not only to repair the harm done to another's good name, but also to make up for any foreseen temporal loss that resulted from the calumny, for example, loss of employment or customers. Since calumny has the added malice of falsehood, reparation is more urgent and mandatory than detraction. The slanderer must not only try to undo the harm done to his victim's reputation, but also he must try to correct the falsehood he made, even with considerable embarrassment to himself.

Fr. Hardon tells us that "a good reputation is the esteem that one person has formed and entertains about another. It may regard his moral qualities, such as honesty, chastity, or truthfulness; it may regard physical and mental qualities or attainments. In either case [of detraction or



Pinocchio is a fictional character and the protagonist of the children's novel *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by the Italian writer Carlo Collodi. Carved by a woodcarver named Geppetto in a small Italian village, he was created as a wooden puppet, but dreamed of becoming a real boy. He has also been used as a character who is prone to telling lies and fabricating stories for various reasons. Everytime he lied, his nose grew. The Cricket, who has lived in Geppetto's house for over a century, appeared after Pinocchio's mischief landed Geppetto in prison, and insists that Pinocchio must either attend school or work, to function properly in the world. When Pinocchio refuses to listen, the Cricket states that "You are a puppet and what's worse is that you have a head of wood", whereupon Pinocchio throws a mallet at the cricket, killing him. In the 1940 Disney film *Pinocchio*, the Talking Cricket is renamed Jiminy Cricket and is portrayed very differently than the actual story, as he becomes Pinocchio's inseparable companion and advisor, having a much less adversarial relationship than in the book.

calumny], reputation is the object of an acquired right, and consequently to take it away or lower it becomes an act of injustice. Not only the living but also the dead have a right to good esteem. During life we wish to remain in the grateful memory of mankind, and such an expectation can lead us to great exploits.” Father states that “the seriousness of the sin of detraction committed will mainly derive from the gravity of the fault or limitation disclosed. But it will also depend on the dignity of the person detracted and the harm done to him and others by revealing something that is hidden and whose disclosure lowers (if it does not ruin) his standing in the public eye.”

There are, however, occasions when revealing a hidden failing of a person should be made. When the revelation of another person's fault is necessary or very useful, as in defense of self or of others, no injustice is done in revealing it. For example, when revealing the faults of persons who represent a danger to oneself or others, one is not guilty of injustice when revealing something hidden about them. This would be the case when revealing the fault or defect of a child to his parent or teacher for his own good or the safety of others. However, even in such instances, Fr. Hardon cautions, “there must be adequate proportion between the lessening of a person’s reputation (which is not intended) and the good to be achieved by the disclosure (which is intended).” This would cover such contingencies as anticipating unjust harm to oneself in the law courts, or even seeking consolation of a trusted friend by revealing the injustice done.

Father also tells us that it is not detraction to tell others about a person who has been convicted of a crime and might still pose a danger to others. He says that the “culprit has lost his right to esteem in the matter. It is conducive to public security that criminals should be known for what they are.” An example would be the requirement that all child sex offenders be registered. The potential danger they might pose to children outweighs any rights to privacy that they might possess.

Ethnic or race profiling: However, Father cautions us that we should be careful of what today is called race or ethnic profiling, since one's reputation may reflect upon a group like an organization or class of people. He states in this regard, "criminal acts of a single member of that group should not be widely disclosed so as not to jeopardize the reputation of all the persons with whom this one individual is commonly identified. Indiscriminate disclosure of this kind is the seedbed of class prejudice."

Rash Judgment: Closely connected with detraction and calumny are rash judgments, which are situations where we form opinions about others without adequate information. These are not situations where we see others do things that are obviously wrong and form judgments that these acts are wrong. Rash judgment comes in at the point where we go beyond the evidence available to judge the guilt of the persons and attribute evil motives to them that we can't possibly know. It is wrong to form opinions against the character or moral integrity of others based on too little evidence. Fr. Hardon informs us that the sinfulness making rash judgments comes from two sources: "the hasty imprudence with which a critical judgment is reached, and the loss of reputation that the person suffers in our estimation because we have judged him adversely."

Fr. Hardon informs us that the sinfulness of rashly judging people arises from two sources: the hasty imprudence with which a critical judgment is reached, and the loss of reputation that the person suffers in our estimation because we have judged him adversely. He says in this regard:

Hasty imprudence in passing judgment on others is an innate tendency of fallen human nature. We are prone to generalize, without adequate premises, where others are concerned and draw sweeping conclusions about their weaknesses and limitations. It is just the opposite where we are concerned, where the tendency is to excuse and minimize, often in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Christ's pointed contrast between these two tendencies brings out the difference: [He Asked], Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye (Mt. 7:3-5).

He continues, "Besides the hastiness to make sweeping conclusions about other people, rash judgments are sinful because everyone has a right to the good esteem of his fellow men. Even if what he has done is conclusive proof of culpability or of defective character, charity forbids our despising a person or, what comes to the same thing, thinking ourselves superior because we are not like him." To make his point, he quotes St. Paul as saying to the early Christians:

True, my conscience does not reproach me at all, but that does not prove that I have been acquitted: the Lord alone is my judge. There must be no passing of premature judgment. Leave that until the Lord comes. He will light up all that is hidden in the dark and reveal the secret intentions of men's hearts. Then will be the time for each one to have whatever praise he deserves, from God (1 Co. 4:4-5).

In order to control this inveterate tendency to praise ourselves and blame others, Fr. Hardon advises us that "it is necessary to leave both ourselves and others in God's hands and trust that, in the final judgment, the truth will then appear. Those who deserve to be rewarded will receive the merit they had earned; those who are to be punished will be visited by their just deserts. In the meantime, i.e., during our mortal stay on earth, all definitive judgments about people, whether ourselves or others, are premature."

In closing this topic, he quotes the *Catechism* as saying, "Only God at the end of time has the right to decide conclusively about the human heart."

Restitution: Not unlike the restitution called for in stealing, detraction demands reparation as far as possible to the injured person's reputation. Often such reparation is next to impossible to make, either because of the number of people informed or the complexity of the situation. But this merely emphasizes the warning of Scripture to "Be careful of your reputation, for it will last you longer than a thousand hoards of gold. A good life lasts a certain number of days, but a good reputation lasts forever" (Si. 41:12-16).

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Fr. Hardon points out that there might be factors excusing a person guilty of detraction or calumny from the duty of repairing injuries caused by their revelations, such as when the injury no longer exists, or reparation is physically impossible, or the person defamed excuses his detractor or calumniator, at least by an implicit condonation, or more often than not reparation would cause the defamer a far greater injury than the one he inflicted.

The Eighth Commandment and Lying

The eighth commandment of the Decalogue in the Old Testament is worded almost identically in Exodus and Deuteronomy. They both state: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”, especially in court. Fr. Hardon states that perjury or falsely swearing to the truth of something against one’s neighbor “stands out in Old Testament morality and the concentration in the old law is on the prohibition of lying against another person. Even more specifically in testifying falsely against someone else.” He tells us that the Old Testament tendency is to forbid telling lies about others, with the implied assumption that people do not ordinarily tell lies about themselves, and that the human tendency is to tell lies about others.

Jesus didn’t change the Old Testament prohibition on lying; however, the focus in the New Testament, in contrast with the Old, is that lying is forbidden because it is a sin against justice, and that we are bound to telling the truth as a matter of charity. In regard to lying, Fr. Hardon asked three questions:

- What is lying?
- Why do people lie?
- How are we to avoid lying?

What is lying: He defines lying in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as:

Speaking deliberately against one's mind. The speech is any communication of ideas to another person, and may be done by means of words, spoken or written, and by gestures. By speaking deliberately is meant that the speaker must realize what he is saying; it is not a mere matter of ignorance or misstatement. When a person tells a lie, he or she says something that is contrary to what is on that person's mind; there is real opposition between what one says and what one thinks.

In other words when a person lies, that person knows what is the truth; consciously and deliberately says something that is contrary to the truth. Lying is not the same as withholding the truth, because there are times we are bound to withhold the truth; i.e., we are to keep secrets.

Lying is when one says or writes something contrary to what is in his mind. He can communicate a lie by the spoken word or in writing. Lying is not due to ignorance; it is a condition in which one knows the truth about something, but communicates the opposite. However, one can just as well

lie by how he communicates with gestures and not only by word or in writing. In this regard, Fr. Hardon says, “You shake your head and the most effective lies are . . . by the human face without opening the lips. Surprisingly, lies may be made by silence.”

Why do people lie: We are living in a world in which it is so hard to know when, whether or who is really telling the truth. A society simply can't function without truth; it would simply fall apart if we couldn't trust that what others tell us is true. Philosophers and theologians have debated the meaning of truth for centuries and they have come up with several theories that attempt to answer the question: “What is truth.” Recall this is the question asked by Pilate at Jesus' trial. Although we can't go into this subject here, but we do discuss it some length in our essay on this website entitled *Aristotelean-Thomistic Philosophy*, Catholics believe that truth does exist and that we can know it either by using reason or from God's revelation. Unlike secular humanists and other relativists, we don't believe that truth is something confined to our subjective minds, thus is relative to time, place, circumstance, situation, context, consequence, proportion, or other such notions, but that truth exists outside of our minds in an objective reality we call God. God is truth. The Ten Commandments is a perfect example of what is true in regard to the proper operation of human societies. To the extent that humans break the commandments, that they disregard truth, there will be disorder and chaos. Breaking the Eighth Commandment is a direct violation of the principle of truth, because it directly involves falsehood.

Nonetheless, as Fr. Hardon claims, it's very hard in the modern world to tell nothing but the truth for twenty-four hours. He goes down through the seven capital sins to explain why people lie:

1. **Pride:** The sin of pride is the first and foremost of all of the sins, because it was pride that led Adam and Eve to commit the first sin, the original sin. Fr. Hardon defines pride in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as “An inordinate esteem of oneself. It is inordinate because it is contrary to the truth. It is essentially an act or disposition of the will desiring to be considered better than a person really is.” He continues, “Pride may be expressed in different ways: by taking personal credit for gifts or possessions, as if they had not been received from God; by glorying in achievements, as if they were not primarily the result of divine goodness and grace; by minimizing one's defects or claiming qualities that are not actually possessed; by holding oneself superior to others or disdaining them because they lack what the proud person has; by magnifying the defects of others or dwelling on them.” He says that “When pride is carried to the extent that a person is unwilling to acknowledge dependence on God and refuses to submit his or her will to God or lawful authority, it is a grave sin. The gravity arises from the fact that a person shows contempt for God or of those who take his place. Otherwise, pride is said to be imperfect and venially wrong.” He concedes that not all sins are prideful, but “it can lead to all sorts of sins, notably presumption, ambition, vainglory, boasting, hypocrisy, strife, and disobedience. Pride strives for perverse excellence. It despises others and, depending on its perversity, even looks down upon God.” We all want people to think well of us. But we know ourselves that we are not all that intelligent or gifted for people to admire us or think well of us. He says, “I don't think that

it is too strong to say that some people are living lies.” The first motive for people telling lies is pride.

Father prescribes the remedies for pride as “a sincere knowledge of oneself, the acceptance of daily humiliations, avoidance of even the least self-complacency, humble acknowledgment of ones' faults, and prayerful communion with God.”

2. **Lust:** *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines lust as” An inordinate desire for or enjoyment of sexual pleasure. The desires or acts are inordinate when they do not confirm to the divinely ordained purpose of sexual pleasure, which is to foster the mutual love of husband and wife and, according to the dispositions of providence, to procreate and educate their children.” The seduction of the innocent through pretending to love another person is often a motive for deceiving others. Lust is the motive for so much untruth especially in our modern sophisticated, sex-preoccupied world. Fr. Hardon reveals that he spent several months under the directives of the Holy See analyzing the “Sex Education in the United States.” He claims that “In all the public school systems in the country and now in most of the still surviving Catholic schools, sex education of the young is required under the pretense of protecting them from AIDS.” Another example is the teaching of homosexuality in the public schools to young by having them read or color stories showing that is normal for children to have two “mommies” or two “daddies” who sleep together.
3. **Anger:** According to *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, anger is “An emotional sense of displeasure and usually antagonism, aroused by real or apparent injury. The anger can be either passionate or nonpassionate, depending on the degree to which the emotions are excited, strongly in one case and mildly in the other.” Because of fear or greed, people might pretend to be kind or friendly toward others, but down deep harbor seething hatred for them.
4. **Greed:** *Modern Catholic Dictionary* states that greed, also known as avarice or cupidity “implies a controlling passion for wealth or possessions and suggests not so much a strong as an inordinate desire and is commonly associated with the lust for power.” Fr. Hardon says that experience has shown him that the fruit of covetousness and greed is lying. He tells us that men who have a business or employees tell him that the hardest thing in business is to get eight hours of honest labor from their employees, and that the highest single loss is the high insurance premiums paid to compensate for theft.
5. **Envy:** Envy, according to *Modern Catholic Dictionary* is “sadness or discontent at the excellence, good fortune, or success of another person. It implies that one considers oneself somehow deprived by what one envies in another or even that an injustice has been done.” It states that “Essential to envy is this sense of deprivation, consequently it is not merely sadness that someone else has some desirable talent or possession, nor certainly the ambition to equal or surpass another person, which can be laudable emulation.” It goes on to say, “It is not the same as jealousy, which implies an unwillingness to share one's

own possessions. Fr. Hardon tells us that “Envy is a sin against charity and, though serious in itself, allows of degrees of gravity depending on whether fully consented to and how important is the object envied. The most serious sin of envy is sadness at the supernatural gifts or graces that another has received from God, i.e., to envy sanctity.” Father claims that envy is a source of more lying than most people realize, for envy is that sadness or resentment that one feels over someone else having what he lacks or has succeeded where he has failed. One can be friendly to persons toward whom he or she deeply envies or resents. Father says that all too often we can fool ourselves, because we can tell lies not only to others, but to ourselves.

6. **Sloth:** Fr. Hardon defines sloth in *New Catholic Dictionary* as “Sluggishness of soul or boredom because of the exertion necessary for the performance of a good work. The good work may be a corporal task, such as walking; or a mental exercise, such as writing; or a spiritual duty, such as prayer. Implicit in sloth is the unwillingness to exert oneself in the performance of duty because of the sacrifice and the effort required.” It has been described as spiritual laziness. In fact, Fr. Hardon prefers laziness to slothfulness. Sloth is simply an unwillingness to do what one is supposed to do.

Fr. Hardon explains that sloth isn't to be confused with mere sadness over the inconvenience involved in fulfilling one's obligations, nor with the indeliberate feelings of repugnance when faced with unpleasant work. It becomes sinful only “when the reluctance is allowed to influence the will and, as a result, what should have been done is either left undone or performed less well than a person is responsible for doing.”

According to Fr. Hardon, the most serious matter with respect to sloth is when it means a “repugnance to divine inspirations or the friendship of God due to the self-sacrifice and labor needed to co-operate with actual grace or to remain in the state of grace.” He says, “This kind of laziness is directly opposed to the love of God and is one of the main reasons why some people, perhaps after years of virtuous living, give up on the pursuit of holiness or even become estranged from God.”

Even though one might be the most industrious person in the community, this isn't the same thing as practicing the virtue of industriousness. One can spend large amounts of time doing things he or she likes to do, but neglect or put off doing things he or she ought to do. We tend to spend the most time and energy on doing things we enjoy doing, although they might not be the most important things to do, and spend the least amount of time and energy on the things we ought to do.

7. **Gluttony:** *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines gluttony as “Inordinate desire for the pleasure connected with food or drink. This desire may become sinful in various ways: by eating or drinking far more than a person needs to maintain bodily strength; by glutting one's taste for certain kinds of food with known detriment to health; by indulging the appetite for exquisite food or drink, especially when these are beyond one's ability to afford

a luxurious diet; by eating or drinking too avidly, i.e., ravenously; by consuming alcoholic beverages to the point of losing full control on one's reasoning powers." Father says that "Intoxication that ends in complete loss of reason is a mortal sin if brought on without justification, e.g., for medical reasons.

Fr. Hardon concludes his discussion of the role of the seven capital sins in lying by asserting, "All the sinful tendencies of human nature, and the seven capital sins are the seven capital sinful tendencies of fallen human nature, are all the seedbed of lying."

Fr. Hardon's recommendation to the problem of lying: Fr. Hardon recommends that to overcome the tendency to lie, "To ask Our Lord to tell you, 'Lord show me where I am not living the truth. Help me,' we should pray, 'Dear Lord, first of all to be the person you want me to be, and then, to live the truth. Because, Dear Lord, when You became Man, You our God, You told us, "I Am the Truth". And if we are to imitate You, that's the formula for sanctity, there is no more fundamental way in which we are to follow You." He draws everything together by saying, "Then like You and through your grace to be what you want us to be and then we are living the truth. Because only those who know the truth, speak the truth and live the truth will reach the Incarnate Truth in that Heavenly Eternity which is reserved only for those who have been the truth. Amen."

Actions forbidden by the Eighth Commandment

The Eighth Commandment orders us to speak the truth responsibly and to avoid rash judgment of our neighbor's actions. It forbids all falsehood and unjust damage to another person's reputation. This includes false witness, slander, lies, detraction, flattery, unfounded suspicion, and rash judgment. Acts forbidden by the Eighth Commandment include:

1. By witnessing what is false, or defending a false accusation, as in lawyers and solicitors; or condemning the innocent, or discharging the guilty, as judges and arbitrators.
2. By detraction, either in laying something false to another's charge, or reporting for truth what is merely doubtful; or in revealing something as yet secret and unknown, though true, to the prejudice of some third person; with a declaration, whether it be done out of levity and indiscretion, or out of malice or ill-will; whether in the presence of many, or in a matter of importance.
3. By lying, or speaking what we judge to be otherwise than we say; whether out of custom, or to the considerable prejudice of others.
4. By hypocrisy, which is a lie in action; it is pretending that others have behaviors, virtues, principles, or beliefs that they don't actually have.
5. False witness (not under oath) or perjury (under oath).
6. Telling large or premeditated lies.
7. Serious gossip, detraction (revealing the faults of another without serious reason), or calumny (harming the reputation of another by falsities).
8. Violation of a confidence without good reason.

9. Being an accomplice to another's grave sin.

The New Commandment of Love

Jesus Christ himself introduced the idea of a “New commandment of love” at the Last Supper (John 13:34). Fr. Hardon tells us that this concept is so important that we must be informed as to its true meaning. One simply can't understand the New Testament without it. The New Testament reveals how God established a New and Eternal Covenant with his people—the Catholic Church—as he had with the Chosen People—the Israelites—in the Old Testament. In the New Covenant, God invites all peoples to membership, not just a select few.

A covenant is a sacred contract between God and humans in which each side in the agreement makes a promise and expects something in return. A covenant goes two ways: a blessing for abiding by its conditions, and a curse for breaking it. This encapsulates the theme of the Book of Deuteronomy, that God would reward his people when they obeyed his commandments and punished when they break them. The Deuteronomic theme permeates the entire Old Testament. The Book of Leviticus in Chapters 17-26 contain a long list of ways the Israelites should relate to each other and keep the Sinai covenant. If they kept these rules, they were promised peace and security, abundant harvests, plentiful rain at the right time, many children, punishment of their enemies, and good terms with God. On the other hand, when they broke their agreement, their vows with God, they were plagued with war, famine, disease, pestilence, sterility, natural disasters, deportation, and other calamities. So the Deuteronomic theme is that God would reward the Israelites when they kept their covenant with him and punish them when they broke it.

In the New Testament—or the New and Eternal Covenant—God promises the outpouring of blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the gospels, if his disciples obeyed his commandments, especially the commandment of love. The promises of the New Covenant are far above and beyond anything known under the Old Covenant, but the requirements are also greater. Fr. Hardon states that on the side of his disciples, it means the practice of greater sacrifice out of love for God, than anything else ever required since the dawn of the human race.

Pre-Christian Judaism: Fr. Hardon tells us that an understanding of the meaning of love in Old Testament Judaism is necessary to understand the expanded meaning of love in the New Testament. Pre-Christian Judaism taught that we should love others, but its scope was severely limited and almost totally lacking outside of Judaism. He states that “To make sure that we realize what God becoming man really means, in practice it principally means loving others with a charity simply unknown and . . . unpracticed outside the ambit of the followers of Christ.”

Already in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Israelites were told, “You must not exact vengeance nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh.” (Leviticus 19:18). However, throughout the

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Old Testament, one's neighbor was understood to mean a fellow Israelite, or at least someone closely associated with the Jews. This included those who had converted to Judaism from Paganism, but never a Gentile as such. Fr. Hardon informs us that the learned commentaries on the Old Testament, show that it was only after the second century before Christ that the Rabbis even began to recommend love for other people than the Israelites. This is true of many if not most of the world's religions; that love of neighbor extends only to those of one's kind, meaning race, ethnicity, or religion. He says that "It is only against this background that the parable of the Good Samaritan takes on its full meaning The Savior's closing statement summed up the contrast between a restricted love of others under the Old Law, and universal love under the New." Although the Old Testament considers the love of neighbor a lot, including one's obligation to assist the poor, and especially widows and orphans, the stress is on helping those of one's kind. Not only was the individual Jew to practice charity towards fellow Jews, but the community as a whole was to do so.

New Testament—St. Luke: While the entire New Testament teaches the duty to love others, it is especially found in Saint Luke's and Saint John's gospels as well as the Acts of the Apostles, John's three letters, and the Book of Revelation. Fr. Hardon contrasts the Christian ideal of love with its absence in the Gentile world:

The followers of Christ loved not only one another, but even their worst enemies with an affection that could only be explained by the influence of more than human power at work in human hearts. Left to its own devices, the human heart is selfish. Left to itself the human heart is cruel. The principle moral miracle that God came into the world to work is the miracle of melting human hearts. And enabling them to love.

St. Luke was writing primarily for Gentiles whose idea of love was so glaringly and blatantly different than the Christian. Fr. Hardon points out that it is St. Luke "who records the longest sustained narrative of the Savior on loving those who do not love us." He states:

This narrative of Saint Luke comes immediately after Christ had given the four beatitudes and four woes. Matthew has eight beatitudes. Luke for reasons best known to the Holy Spirit who inspired him doesn't give us eight beatitudes, he gives us four beatitudes and four curses. Each pronounced by Christ. Right after giving these four beatitudes, which is four promises of happiness and four threats, Christ warned the disciples not to expect to be accepted by the world. Then come a series of new commandments on the practice of charity. And would you believe it? They amount to ten.

Then Fr. Hardon proceeds to show how St. Luke applies the New Commandments of Love in ten different ways; i.e., the Ten Commandments of Love.

- **First Commandment:** "But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). This is the opposite of what we are naturally inclined to do. Our inclination is to be kind to the kind, and loving to the lovable, as well as hostile to

those who are hostile. That was essentially the Pagan way of understanding love in St. Luke's day.

- **Second Commandment:** “bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:28). Instinctively we treat others in the way they treat us. To the contrary, Christians are asked to bless those who curse them. To bless or wish well to those who wish them evil and to pray for those who mistreat them. Fr. Hardon says this is not only difficult to do, but is impossible without God's grace.
- **Third Commandment:** “To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic” (Luke 6:29). Fr. Hardon says that Jesus is not telling us to ask for humiliation or foolishly expose ourselves to being robbed. Nor is he denying us the right we have to our good name or personal possessions, which we have a right even to defend. But instead he is indicating the readiness he expects of his followers to follow him in bearing insults and injuries for the sake of his name.
- **Fourth Commandment:** “Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back” (Luke 6:30). Fr. Hardon says again that Jesus is not saying we should blindly give to anyone whatever he asks for. Nor that we may not legitimately demand restitution after being robbed. But he is saying that our disposition of soul should be such that we see this as God's providence. Everything that happens to us is part of God's mysterious providence. Nothing happens unless it is part of God's plan.
- **Fifth Commandment:** “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). Fr. Hardon says almost all of us would like to have others practice patience towards us; to put up with us; to practice forbearance toward us; to be understanding and kindly and thoughtful and kind and cheerful to us. This being so, that's the way we should behave towards others.
- **Sixth Commandment:** “But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Luke 6:35). We shouldn't expect to be repaid by any one to whom we have done good. In fact, we shouldn't be disappointed even if the good we have shown others isn't returned. It all gets down to the motive for doing good. By doing good, we imitate God who gives both to those who deserve and those who don't. The rain falls on the good and the bad. Fr. Hardon says of God's generosity: “God is kind and bounteous toward everyone. So kind indeed that we are liable to be scandalized at God's what seems to be prodigal charity If God loves all without discrimination, so should we. Moreover . . . we are assured we shall be repaid in God's own way and time because we have behaved like Him in the practice of selfless love.”

- **Seventh Commandment:** “Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). Compassion here means mercy, because mercy is an act of love. Fr. Hardon says that “mercy is love that costs the one who loves. There is cheap love and costly love. Another name for costly love is Mercy. It sees others suffering and in need and does not turn away but turns towards them to alleviate their pain and as far as possible meet their need.”
- **Eighth Commandment:** “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned” (Luke 6:37). Fr. Hardon says that Jesus is not saying here that we shouldn’t pass judgement, i.e., negative judgement on people’s misconduct. If they do wrong, we shouldn’t approve of it. What Jesus is saying is that we shouldn’t condemn the person. In other words, only God knows people’s motives and how guilty they are. We are allowed to pass judgement on the misbehavior, mis-conduct, even the crimes of others; however, we can’t judge their motives or degree of guilt. Only God knows the human heart. Fr. Hardon cautions us not to condemn the person, even when you must condemn the crime.
- **Ninth Commandment:** “Forgive and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:37). Fr. Hardon says that this injunction is almost an axiom of New Testament morality, that it is even imbedded in the Lord’s Prayer. God will be as merciful to those who are merciful and forgiving to those who are forgiving.
- **Tenth Commandment:** “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you” (Luke 6:38). Fr. Hardon says that this isn’t a bargaining proposal; it is part of the New Covenant, the contract or agreement where each side makes a demand of the other and makes a promise in return. Here Jesus is telling us the kind of love we show to others is the kind of love God will show us. Our generosity towards others will not go unrewarded by God either in this life or the next. Father assures us that one thing we know for sure is that “our generosity will always merit divine grace in this world, and celestial glory in the world to come . . . To believe this and consistently act on this commandment is almost a definition of Christian sanctity.”

New Testament—St. John: Fr. Hardon states that it is not surprising that John, whom divine revelation calls “the beloved disciple” is the same one who gave us that profound and inspiring definition of God, that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He continues, “Nor surprising that the one who leaned on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper, that this same man would say so much about our love, not only for God but for others.” St Luke’s Ten Commandments of love are practical and down to earth, whereas St John’s are theological. Whereas St. Luke tells us how to put into practice the Commandment of Love, St. John tells us what it really means. As St. John describes Jesus’ last discourse at the Last Supper to his apostles, Jesus after foretelling his approaching passion and death, tells them “I give you a new commandment, love one another, just as I have loved you. You

also must love one another. By this love that you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:34-35).

How Jesus’ command to love one another is new: How is Jesus’ commandment to love others new? Why does Jesus call this a new commandment? Fr. Hardon says it is new only if it surpasses the old. He says that it is the practice of this kind of charity that in essence makes the New Testament new.” To love one another is more than just a command to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Father believes “we love ourselves deeply. We love ourselves endearingly. We love ourselves constantly. We love ourselves . . . selflessly. That is Old Testament charity.” But Old Testament love falls far short of what Jesus is asking us to do.

Besides, people don’t always love themselves in the Christian sense of having respect, let alone reverence for their own person. In fact, many people really don’t love themselves very well in the Christian sense of loving. What people call self-love is perhaps better called self-esteem, which means the worth they place on their own person, their self-evaluation—including their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual characteristics—which all too often is not very high. People who abuse their bodies by excess and their souls by sin in many different ways aren’t showing love for themselves in the sense of caring for their well-being. Many of them suffer from low self-image or an inferiority complex, which makes it impossible to care or love themselves, if at all. People have to be first loved before they can learn to love in return. People can care or love others only to the extent they love themselves. People with low self-esteem usually suffer from inferiority complexes and try to compensate by lording it over others. I don’t believe there are very many people with genuine superiority complexes, but mainly people suffering from inferiority complexes compensating for their inadequacies.

All too often the love they have for themselves is selfish love rather than the selfless love that Jesus calls for. Loving oneself, even in the Old Testament sense, does not mean selfishness or self-centeredness; it means to care about one’s person—mentally, physically, emotionally, and above spiritually, because humans are created in God’s image and likeness and redeemed by Christ. God loves us so we should love ourselves too. He loves others, so we should love them too. What people generally mean by loving themselves is selfish, self-centered love, not the selfless love of Jesus’ commandment to love others as he has loved us. To love others as Jesus loves us is a big order, perhaps too big for most people to fill.

Fr. Hardon says that it is this kind of selfless practice of charity that is identified in the followers of Jesus. How is it possible to love others as Jesus has loved us? We couldn’t except by his grace, his presence in our souls loving through us. Father states that “no one else but a person enabled by the grace of Christ, can love like Christ. Christ can love in that absolutely selfless way, because Christ is God.”

Even Old Testament charity demanded a lot of grace from God. What then, did Christ do by making new, the commandment to love? Fr. Hardon says by “elevating the norm from earth to Heaven? No longer is the standard by which we love others our own endearing self-love. We are

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to love others as God, God become man loves us. And surely He loves us more than we love ourselves.” Humans can love others as Jesus loves us only to the extent we have his life in us, meaning his grace.

Fr. Hardon claims that in all centuries of recorded history no civilization has commanded that its citizens love others as they love themselves. Even that standard is too high for them to achieve. He says “The best that any civil law has ever been able to demand, and as we know from our crowded jails, it is almost impossible to have people observe, all the civil laws can command is: you shall not be unjust to your neighbor. You shall not steal from your neighbor. You shall not kill your neighbor. No legislator no learned Solomon would dare command his citizens to love others as they love themselves.” According to Fr. Hardon, what is new about Jesus’ commandment is that it identifies the upper limits of our love for others, which is to love our neighbor without limits. He tells us that the limit to love is to be willing to lay down one’s life for the loved one. Jesus reveals what he means by the limit to love by saying “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Father states “This commandment therefore of Christ is new because it prescribes limitless charity. That we are to love others even at the cost of the pain that a person experiences in dying. We are to love others even unto agony.” Finally, Jesus’ commandment became the foundation of the Christian community. He told his followers “Not only love your neighbor, but love one another” (John 13:35). Commenting on this passage, Fr. Hardon states:

Christ’s commandment of love describes the kind of reciprocal, mutual, interchange of love among two or more people. It is that kind of love; given by two people each to the other, or by three people each to the other, or by thirty people each to the other . . . that constitutes a Christian community. A community is not a group of people with four walls around them. Community is not cohabitation. My favorite symbol of people being physically near each other without forming a community is a crowded elevator. And when I visit my publisher on Park Avenue in New York; because the elevator goes to forty-six floors, all kinds of people . . . are close to each other . . . They are proximate all right to one another. But unless love unites people, you have a crowd but you don’t have a community. This newness that Christ conferred on His Commandment of love is at the foundation of His Church.

It is finally new because it became the foundation of the Christian community, the Church. Jesus told his followers “Not only love your neighbor, but love one another.” Jesus said “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Love is not based on emotion or sentiment, but is an operation of the human will enlightened by faith. The new commandment of love to love one another as I have loved you sums up the Christian Faith.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT



Pope Benedict XVI says in regard to the Sermon on the Mount in his *Jesus of Nazareth*, that Jesus is the second Torah or Law that fulfills the first Torah, the heart of which is the Ten Commandments. The Torah is the Jewish name for the law, which is contained in the first five books of the Old Testament. The Greek translation is known as the Pentateuch, which means five books.

The Sermon on the Mount contains Jesus' interpretation of the Ten Commandments and how to pray. It was given early in his public ministry in Galilee. It is no accident that the Sermon was delivered on a mountain, which parallels Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on another mountain. It immediately followed his selection of the twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16). Although it was no doubt delivered for the edification of the audience and the scribes and Pharisees who were present, Fr. Giuseppe Ricciotti in his monumental *The Life of Christ* believes that it was probably intended primarily to instruct his newly appointed Apostles in his teachings. Everyone who heard him believed that Jesus spoke as one having authority, whether they agreed with what he said or not. During his sermon, Jesus gave us the blueprint for holiness and virtue, the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the prelude to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7.

In this sermon, Jesus made specific promises of Beatitude to those who perform certain good works. Beatitude means happiness, blessedness, bliss, or blissfulness. Fr. John Hardon defines the Beatitudes as “a summary of the difficulties to be overcome by the faithful Christian.” He says that they are significant because they are uniquely Christian principles of human conduct. He goes on to say:

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[T]he norms set down in the Beatitudes go far beyond the dialogue in which Christ confirmed the Decalogue. The Beatitudes are its fulfillment. The Ten Commandments given on Mt. Sinai summarize pre-Christian morality. The Beatitudes assume the Decalogue and they go beyond it. One reason the Beatitudes are able, humanly speaking, to make such heavy demands on human nature is because God, when he became man, gave man the grace to go beyond the Decalogue. The Beatitudes are a perfect synthesis of Christ's own life; they are, if you wish, a summary of Christ's own practice of virtue. When we say that perfection consists in following Christ and ask what that means, we can answer that it means practicing the Beatitudes, which Christ first practiced and then preached.

Jesus came not to destroy the Law of Moses and the Prophets, but to fulfill them: Although Jesus went beyond the Ten Commandments, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that he came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). In this regard, he said, "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18-19). What Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount was to emphasize and elaborate on and perfect the commandments of love found in the Mosaic Law, love of God and neighbor. The first three commandments are oriented to love of God and the second seven refer to love of neighbor.

Fr. Hardon says that "Jesus explicitly raised the demands of the Mosaic Law, known to have been given by Yahweh. He thereby equated himself with the Lord of the Old Testament, because in his own name, and without apology, he proclaimed such drastic revision of Judaic morality that even after twenty centuries, the Jewish code does not recognize the change, e.g., in the dissolubility of marriage and the right to remarriage after divorce." Moreover, Jesus explained the Law by adding to it, such as saying, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28); or "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22); or "Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:31-33); or. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). One of the reasons the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy was his appearing to change or add to the Law, which, of course, only God can do. .

According to Fr. Hardon, to make the connection between the Old and the New Testament, "St Matthew went to great pains to recall the Sermon on the Mount, with its studied contrast with the ethics of the Old Law or, at least of most Jews at the time of Christ. Jesus began by insisting that he did not come to destroy the Law of the Prophets, but to fulfill. Then he proceeded to lay down

a standard of morality that marked for all time the cleavage with former days, and the fulfillment of a long-awaited holy One who would sanctify those who believed in his name.” He goes on to say, “Writing for the Jews, Matthew synthesized the Master’s teachings in the eight Beatitudes and climaxed them in the Lord’s Prayer. Taken together, these norms of conduct introduced a new dimension into human culture and, quite alone, warrant the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth professed to be more than a human legislator.”

Jesus proclaims a higher standard of conduct than the Law and the Prophets: Why did Jesus proclaim a higher standard of conduct than had the Law and the Prophets? On this matter Fr. Hardon says that “proclaiming a higher standard of conduct would have been meaningless unless those for whom it was intended were assured the moral strength to carry it into effect. At this point, all of Christ’s references to himself as the source of grace and moral power come into play--synthesized in the declaration, ‘Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy, and my burden light’” (Matthew 11.28-30). In other words, humans can achieve the higher standard only with the help of God’s grace, whose source is the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ to help us achieve holiness and live virtuous lives. The Israelites under the old law were not held to as high a standard of moral conduct, because they didn’t have the aid of the sacraments.

Fr. Hardon goes on to say, “Christ made his moral doctrine not only possible but, in many ways, prescriptive. He therefore not only described what his followers might aspire to, but also legislated what they were obliged to do. His parting words to the disciples were that they might teach all ‘that I have commanded you,’ and his sanction was that those who would believe and act accordingly would be saved; but those who should refuse to believe, or refuse to live up to their faith, would be lost.” We might add that the Old Law didn’t confer grace. Grace was obtained by the Israelites by faith in the Messiah, the Christ (Christos), which was to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As with the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes are not the eight suggestions; they are obligatory to those who hope to achieve union with God in this life and get to Heaven in the next.

The paradox of the beatitudes: It has been said that the Beatitudes perfectly illustrate or exemplify the paradoxical character of Christianity. The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines a paradox as “A seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true.” In other words, it is an apparent contradiction. Fr. Ricciotti states in his noteworthy *The Life of Christ* that the world sees the paradoxes of the Sermon on the Mount as absurd. They make sense only to those who await the Kingdom of Heaven. Father says all human wisdom maintained that “blessedness for man was good fortune, that satisfaction came with satiety [getting one’s fill], that pleasure was the satisfaction of desire, and honor the product of esteem.” To the contrary, Jesus says in the Sermon that “man’s blessedness resides in misfortune, satiety by famished hunger, pleasure in unfulfillment, and honor in disesteem.” Father tells us that the ancient Stoic philosophers called contradictions of this sort paradoxes, contrary to common sense. He says that “In this sense, the Sermon on the Mount is the most complete and radical paradox ever asserted.”

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Of this matter Fr. Hardon says, “We speak of Christian mysteries, and so they are. They are not fully comprehensible to the human mind. We are told, ‘He that loses his life will find it’ and ‘those who are great, but become small, will inherit the kingdom.’ We are told that God has chosen the ‘little things’, the ‘foolish things’, to confound the strong and the wise. These are all paradoxes.” Fr. Hardon states that he likes to identify mystery with paradox, and says that our faith is full of paradoxes. He says that “In the Beatitudes, the paradox is happiness, which Christ promises if a person does certain things that naturally—or humanly speaking—are the very opposite of what we would expect to bring happiness. In short, He tells us to do things that we don’t naturally enjoy and then tells us we are going to have joy,” if we do them.

Father tells us that “the Beatitudes are a perfect synthesis of Christ’s own life; they are in a sense a summary of Christ’s own practice of virtue. When we say that perfection consists in following Christ and ask what that means, we can answer that it means practicing the Beatitudes, which Christ first practiced and then preached.”

Germain Grisez, a prominent Catholic moral theologian, says in his book *Christian Moral Principles of the Beatitudes*, "Along with obvious differences, there also are similarities between the role of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament and that of the Beatitudes in the New. As God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses, and then the rest of the law is unfolded from them, so Jesus gives the Beatitudes to his followers, and then the rest of the moral implications of the new covenant are unfolded. The Beatitudes provide a properly Christian moral framework. Although their relationship to the rest of the moral content of faith has never been clarified in detail, they have had an important place in moral instruction throughout Christian history. These are extrinsic, but not insignificant, reasons for taking the Beatitudes as organizing principles in analyzing Christian norms and virtues." I have always told my students that the Sermon on the Mount, which begins with the Beatitudes, is a God’s blueprint for living virtuous and holy lives.



Germain G. Grisez (born 1929) is a French-American philosopher. Grisez's development of ideas from Thomas Aquinas has redirected Catholic thought and changed the way it has engaged with secular moral philosophy. He is formally a Professor of Christian Ethics at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

The Beatitudes as found in Matthew 5:3-12 are as follows, followed by a brief explanation of each:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
3. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
5. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

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6. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
8. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
9. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad.

The Beatitudes are promises of happiness made by Jesus to those who faithfully accept his teaching and follow his divine example. Preached in the Sermon on the Mount, they are recorded in St. Matthew (5:3-11) and in St. Luke (6:20-22).

Meaning of each of the Beatitudes

Christianity is a religion of contradiction and paradox. Fr. Hardon defines contradiction in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as a “the complete denial or total exclusion of the opposite. In general, the opposition between judgments or propositions that cannot simultaneously be both true and false. An apparent contradiction that is really true.” He defines paradox as “An apparent contradiction that is really true. Christianity is the religion of paradox: That God would be human, that life comes from death, that achievement comes through failure, that folly is wisdom, that happiness is to mourn, that to find one must lose, and that the greatest are the smallest. What is paradoxical about the mysteries of the faith is that reason cannot fully penetrate their meaning, so that what seems contradictory to reason is profoundly true in terms of faith.” Following is a discussion of each Beatitude, in turn:

- **Blessed (or happy) are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of Heaven:** Poverty of spirit is “detachment of spirit”. So one can be wealthy by human standards, but still be poor in spirit if not attached to the things of this world. The wealthy person who looks at his or her wealth as a trust and tries to use it as a good steward for the glory of God and the benefit of others is one poor in spirit. Jesus tells us that if we aren’t poor in spirit, we won’t be happy. And we certainly won’t grow in holiness and virtue. In this regard, Fr. Hardon says, “We are, therefore, not to dwell on what we have. Not to think ourselves better than somebody else because we have more than someone else has. Why? Because whatever we have is a gift. We are not to parade our gifts. He relates a story, which was a lesson in humility, about when his fourth grade teacher, Sister Georgine, took him aside one day after class and told him “John, don’t be a showoff.” He not only was to become one of the greatest theologians and catechists of the twentieth century, but became such a holy and virtuous man that his cause for canonization for sainthood was begun in 2006.
- **Happy are the meek (or gentle), they shall have the earth for their heritage (or they shall inherit the earth):** To begin, what does “meek” or “gentleness” mean? Like humility, this is a word not easily defined, because gentleness is not much respected

in today's world. It is the aggressive person who is respected and honored in our society. Fr. Hardon defines gentleness as strength restrained by love. He says that gentleness is not weakness; but to the contrary, just the opposite. An example is when someone hurts us and we don't hurt him or her back. Everything in us might cry out to tear a person to shreds, but love keeps us from doing what our nature urges us to do. One can readily see the apparent contradiction here—the paradox of Christianity.

Meekness doesn't mean being a wimp though. A meek person is not one who fails to confront someone else when they should be corrected or challenged, because of fear of offending him or her or hurting his or her feelings. Fr. Hardon tells us that the Church Fathers say to "inherit the earth" we must in such circumstances use our ability, through God's grace, to prevail over others. He says that "Gentleness conquers, gentleness wins, gentleness overcomes, gentleness prevails over the hardest hearts, over the most humanly impossible situations . . . To prevail over human wills; there is no more difficult conquest on earth. The secret is restraint, gentleness." Jesus clarified this later in the Sermon when he said "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you" (Matthew 5: 38-42). Aggressiveness wins no one over; it simply begets more aggression.

- **Happy are those who mourn; they shall be comforted:** According to Fr. Hardon, this Beatitude is the nearest to a contradiction or paradox that we can imagine. He says it's like saying, "Happy are those who are unhappy." To clarify what Jesus meant by this saying, Fr. Hardon says that it might help to distinguish between the meaning of sorrow and sadness.

He tells us that by this saying Jesus does not mean, "Happy are those who are sad." It's true that sadness is mourning, but it is either mourning over things that don't deserve to be mourned over, or it is going beyond the extent to which they were supposed to be mourned. He says that sadness is either mourning over the wrong object or excessive mourning.

On the other hand, Father Hardon says that sorrow is grief over what deserves to be mourned as well as mourned in the right way. To illustrate his point, he refers to the three instances in the Gospels where we are told that our Lord wept: he wept over Jerusalem, over Lazarus' tomb, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. The question is, "Why did Christ weep?" Fr. Hardon says that Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it was sinning. He wept at the Garden of Gethsemane because he feared the suffering and death he was about to undergo, but most of all because of all the people over the ages who would reject the sacrifice he was about to make for their sins. He says that Jesus sorrowed at Lazarus' tomb, as we too sorrow over the loss of people we love. God gives us the comfort that brings

strength or fortitude to bear patiently with the sorrows he puts into our lives. Therefore, it isn't wrong to give into sorrow over the loss of loved ones, but we should also know when to turn away from it. Prolonged, excessive sorrow can burden us down and make us morbid or sad. Christians are supposed to experience joy in their lives, because they know there is always hope. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and means happiness in living the Christian life

- **Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right (or for righteousness or justice), for they shall be satisfied:** Fr. Hardon tells us that hungering and thirsting after something means to desire something. He goes on to say that not all of our desires are for what is right. To follow Christ one must desire and choose what is right. When we do this, all of our desires will be satisfied. One will never be frustrated, because frustration is nothing more than unfulfilled desires.

Father says that frequently, the trouble is not with having desires—that is what life this side of Heaven is all about. The trouble is in what we desire. Heaven is the fulfillment of desires, provided we desire what is right. And that is not easy because there a lot of things that clamor for satisfaction and seductively present themselves as appealing. However, the only question that should ever be on our minds is not how appealing or how desirous a thing is, but how right it is. If we have the right desires, they will all be satisfied. The right desires are what God has willed for us: to obey his commandments; to do his will in all things. However, we must know what is right in order to do it.

- **Happy are the merciful; they shall have mercy shown to them:** According to Fr. Hardon, mercy is not a popular word outside of Christianity. He defines mercy as love that overcomes resistance. For example, we love in spite of the fact that we are not loved. We love those things that cause us difficulty and trouble. In fact, we love even those who not only don't love us, but who may oppose us, who may even hate us and cause us harm. Father says that this is the type of mercy that God has towards us. It is his love overcoming resistance. It is we who offer resistance to God's love, yet in spite of this, God still loves us. He says that this is mercy.
- **How happy (or blessed) are the pure of heart, for they shall see God:** Fr. Hardon tells us that there are many meanings to the expression "pure of heart" or "purity of heart". But the one that we cannot omit is the internal chastity of mind, symbolized by the biblical word "heart". Father says that whenever the Scriptures want to interiorize a virtue, they speak of having it in one's heart.

What then is meant by internal chastity? Father explains that we usually think of chastity in the external sense, because quite obviously it deals with the senses and the control of the sexual pleasures natural to us. However, "Purity of heart" is internal chastity of mind or what he calls, "chastity of the imagination". Fr. Hardon says, "This is more than chastity of body, or chastity of the senses. It means that kind of custody over the internal move-

ments of our spirit in which we sacrifice the very laudable, and beautiful and sacred satisfaction, which God permits only to those who are married and only within the marital embrace.” Furthermore, he says that “purity of heart” is required of all Christ’s followers. It is not only priests or religious, who vow to celibacy, who are called to practice chastity of heart, but also married people outside of their own marital relations also called to practice “purity of heart”. He acknowledges that this is very difficult, especially in a society saturated with sex. Nevertheless, those who desire to see God in this life and in the next must practice “purity of heart”. Father says that chastity confers clarity of vision, which enables a person to see God in a way that those who do not practice chastity cannot. He tells us that God’s beauty and goodness, even in the most impossible situations of life—is reserved for those who have learned the secret of purity of heart. When we study the lives of the saints we see that purity of heart is one of their most conspicuous virtues.

- **How happy are the peacemakers, they shall be called the children of God:** Of this Beatitude, Fr. Hardon says that there is so much disorder in the world that God wants peace-makers. Peacemaking means reconciliation, first with God, the highest kind of peacemaking; with others, then with ourselves, and finally within ourselves. Then he asked, what is the promise of this Beatitude? He answers that this Beatitude promises a special affection from God, even as a mother or father has for a child. As peacemakers we are to labor to reconcile sinners with God as well as people we love, people we want only the best for, who are estranged from God, or who are estranged among themselves. Finally as a kind of capstone, he says this is the most unexpected kind of happiness.
- **Happy are those who suffer persecution for justice sake, they shall possess the kingdom of God:** Fr. Hardon states that Jesus knew he couldn’t let this Beatitude stand alone; he had to explain it. Jesus said “Happy are you when men reproach you, persecute you, and speaking falsely, say all manner of evil against you for my sake.” Father is here quoting Matthew 5:11 in the Sermon on the Mount. In the next verse Jesus even goes further when he says “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Father says that this Beatitude is all that keeps him sane at times. Although he was too humble and obedient to say so, he is here making reference to the fact that he was often persecuted for his orthodox stand on doctrinal and moral issues, even from his own religious order, the Jesuits, at times. He encourages us to stand up for the Truth, but in doing so, we must expect to be opposed. He warns us that if we are not persecuted, if we are not opposed, if we are not spoken falsely about, if people don’t say all manner of evil against us for Christ’s sake; we had better suspect our loyalty to the Master. I have told my students on numerous occasions that if the world praises you, you had better carefully examine your lives, because you are probably doing something extraordinarily wrong.

This Beatitude appears to be one especially appropriate for our time, because as Father reminds us, this is one of those few ages in history called an “age of persecution”; that since 1900 more martyrs died for the name of Christ than in all the previous centuries of

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Christianity put together? And look at the martyrs in the Middle East and Africa from the persecution and violence of Islamic Terrorism. And this persecution still goes on, not simply against red blood martyrs who have and are dying for Christ, but also those white martyrs who live their lives for him at all cost, including loss of reputation, employment, social standing, and the like.

A lot more could be said about the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, but we will close this section by quoting Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel C.F.R, a professional psychologist and a prominent spiritual director, and was one of Mother Teresa's spiritual directors: "The Beatitudes portray a life directed towards saintliness or holiness." He says that they speak to both our minds and our hearts. He then goes on to tie the Beatitudes to the three stages of holiness: the Purgative stage or way; the Illuminative stage; and the Unitive stage. These, in turn, can be related to the three types of prayer recognized and perfected by the Church over the ages: vocal, meditative, and contemplative prayer.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

In addition to the Ten Commandments, the Catholic Church requires that we obey five Precepts of the Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines precepts as “Positive laws (sometimes called commandments) made by Church authorities to guarantee for the faithful the indispensable minimum in prayer and moral effort, for the sake of their growth in love of God and neighbor” (No. 2041). They are as follows:

1. The first precept states that we must attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor on these days. To keep holy the day of the Lord's Resurrection: to worship God by participating in Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation: to avoid those activities that would hinder renewal of soul and body, e.g., needless work and business activities, unnecessary shopping, etc.
2. The second precept says that we must confess our sins at least once a year. To lead a sacramental life: to receive Holy Communion frequently and the Sacrament of Penance regularly. Minimally, to receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once a year (annual confession is obligatory only if serious sin is involved).
3. The third precept requires us to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season. Minimally, to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, between the First Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday.
4. The fourth precept states that we must observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. The fifth precept requires us to help provide for the material needs of the Church in accordance with our ability. To strengthen and support the Church: one's own parish community and parish priests; the worldwide Church and the Holy Father.

Other precepts include: To study Catholic teaching in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, to be confirmed, then to continue to study and advance the cause of Christ; To observe the marriage laws of the Church; to give religious training (by example and word) to one's children; to use parish schools and religious education programs; To do penance, including abstaining from meat and fasting from food on the appointed days; To join in the missionary spirit and apostolate of the Church.

The precepts are certain commandments of a moral and ecclesiastical nature prescribed for observance by all Catholics. Their formulation goes back to the Middle Ages, and their number has varied from four to six or more, depending on the times. A recent list of such duties "expected of Catholic Christians today" was formulated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States, as follows:

THE MEANING OF SIN

Breaking the Commandments and Precepts of the Church is sinful. That part of Catholic theology dealing with morality and immorality, good and bad conduct, or virtue and vice, is called moral theology. Morality deals with putting God's commandments into practice and by living our lives in accordance with his will. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sin “is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God” (1849, 1853). Sin is asserting our will rather than adhering to God's will. It's saying to God: “My will be done,” and not “Thy will be done.” In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. “Mortal sin,” the *Catechism* teaches, “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (1855).

Mortal Sin: Mortal means death and mortal sin means spiritual death of the soul. It destroys the life of grace within one's soul; we lose sanctifying grace, which is God's life within us. When one deliberately disobeys God's commandments—does an act contrary to his will—with full knowledge that it is a serious matter and with full consent of the will and not due to any fear or coercion, he commits mortal sin; consequently, God leaves his soul and he dies a spiritual death. The person who has violated his friendship with God is no longer God's friend. He is no longer in good standing in God's family; he loses his place in his family; he is no longer his adopted child. One who loses his place in God's family loses his inheritance of Heaven. He is on the road that leads to eternal death and separation from God forever. God simply will not live where he is not wanted. Like the dead body, which cannot bring itself back to life, the dead soul in mortal sin can do nothing to rejuvenate itself; only God can give it life once again. All mortal sins must be confessed, because they kill the life of God in our souls.

Three things are necessary for a sin to be mortal:

1. The violation must be a serious matter.
2. One must have knowledge or firm belief that the act is seriously wrong prior to committing it.
3. One must give full consent of the will.

All three of these conditions must be present simultaneously for a sin to be mortal. This means that if one did not know the act was seriously wrong, then he or she is not guilty of having committed a mortal sin. If one did not will the act, e.g., if you were forced or if it was in a dream, he or she is not guilty of having committed a mortal sin. All mortal sins committed since one's last confession must be confessed by both type and number, i.e., the title of the sin and how many times it was done. If there is a mortal sin from the past that was forgotten and has not been

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confessed, it should be confessed at your next confession. It is not necessary to confess venial sins, but it is a good and pious practice.

Although we can lose God's friendship and our place in his family by committing mortal sin, because of God's infinite love and mercy we can easily regain his friendship and be reinstated into his family by sorrow for our sins, repentance, confession, and a firm purpose of amendment. God is always waiting with open arms to receive his prodigal sons and daughters back into his family. God dwells in us as long as we remain in his sanctifying grace. God must be dwelling in our souls at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can achieve and maintain God's grace only by living lives of faith, hope, and above all love of God and neighbor.

Some unfortunately believe that they can live sinful lives and repent and convert late in life and make it to Heaven. What can be said about this attitude? Those who live in habitual mortal sin are on the superhighway to Hell and will find it extremely difficult to get back on the straight and narrow path to Heaven. Fr. Hardon says of habitual mortal sin, "If one serious sin can cause such devastating effects, it is not difficult to imagine the deplorable state of those who live in habitual mortal sin. Eventually the habit of sin, like all habits, becomes like a second nature to the sinner, so that it is very difficult to convert to a life of virtue. Rather, the individual will be characterized by one or more of the capital sins: *pride, gluttony, lust, avarice, sloth, envy, anger*" (*The Catholic Catechism*). I believe this is why deathbed conversions are rare. Those who live in habitual mortal sin and vice become what they do and seldom see the need to change. Incidentally, Fr. Hardon was on the board of advisors to Seton Academy with which John Paul II Catholic High School is affiliated.

Venial Sin: Venial sin is a lesser sin that does not lose for us God's sanctifying grace (*venia* means pardon). Venial sin is a sickness of the soul, but not one that kills us. Fr. Hardon says that, "The sinner who commits a mortal sin is like the traveler who turns his back on the goal and begins to travel in the opposite direction. But the person who commits a venial sin merely departs from the straight path without abandoning the journey toward the goal" (*The Catholic Catechism*). He identifies three classes of venial sins:

- Those that by their very nature involve a disorder or deviation, although only a slight one, such as a small lie that does no damage to anyone.
- Those that, because of the smallness of the matter involved, constitute only a light disorder, such as stealing a small amount of money
- Those that lack complete deliberation or full consent of the will in matters that would otherwise be serious sins, such as the taking of God's name in vain.

However, Fr. Hardon tells us that we must "distinguish between venial sins committed out of weakness, surprise, or lack of advertence and deliberation, and those that are committed coldly and with the complete awareness that one thereby displeases God. We can never completely avoid the former, and God, who knows very well the clay of which we are made, readily forgives us these

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sins of weakness. The only thing that one can do about these faults is to try to diminish their number so far as possible and to avoid discouragement” (*The Catholic Catechism*).

Why are venial sins so detrimental to the spiritual life? Fr. Hardon lists four effects of venial sins that are especially detrimental to the spiritual life:

1. It deprives us of many actual graces that God would otherwise have given us. This privation sometimes results in our falling into a temptation that we could have avoided by means of that actual grace of which we were deprived. At other times it may result in the loss of a new advance in the spiritual life. Only in the light of eternity—and then there is no remedy—will we realize what we have lost as a result of deliberate venial sins.
2. It lessens the fervor of charity and one's generosity in the service of God. This fervor and generosity presuppose a sincere desire for perfection and a constant striving for it, which are totally incompatible with voluntary venial sin, because the latter implies a rejection of the lofty ideal and a deliberate halt in the struggle for greater holiness.
3. It increases the difficulties in the exercise of virtue. This is a result of the two previous effects. Deprived of many actual graces that are necessary to keep us on the path of the good, and weak in fervor and generosity in the service of God, the soul gradually loses more and more of its spiritual energy. Virtue appears to be more difficult, the effort required for growing in holiness becomes more and more demanding, and the experience of past failures disheartens the soul.
4. It predisposes for mortal sin. This is perhaps the worst detrimental effect of venial sin. This is clearly testified in Scripture when it is stated that he who wastes the little he has is gradually stripped bare (Sirach. 19:1). Experience confirms that the ultimate fall of many souls has been started in this way. Little by little the soul has lowered its defenses until the moment arrives in which the enemy, in one furious assault, conquers the city (*The Catholic Catechism*).

Fr. Jordan Aumann, one of the world's most outstanding spiritual theologians and directors, says that “Deliberate venial guilt is a disease that slackens the spiritual powers, lowers a man's resistance to evil, and causes him to deviate from the path that leads to glory. It places obstacles in the way of virtue and reduces fervor for the things of God” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Imperfections: Are there any other types of human weaknesses identified by the Church? Yes! Mortal and venial sins are acts that are intrinsically evil. Even though they may be small matters, venial sins are still by their nature evil acts. There is another class of behaviors due to our human weaknesses called imperfections. These are situations in which one chooses the lesser of two good actions. In other words, either choice is good and the choice made does not cease to be good even though it could have been a better choice. Nevertheless, Fr. Hardon states that “the imperfections are detrimental to the spiritual life and impede the flight of the soul to sanctity (*The Catholic*

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Catechism). The perfect example is the Blessed Mother. She was not only free from Original and actual sin, but she always made the better of two good choices when given the opportunity. She was able to do this because she was full of God's grace. Living a life of perfect virtue as did our Blessed Mother requires that we strive to eliminate even imperfections from our lives. Jesus himself said to be perfect as is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). He would not have said this if it were not possible.

Achieving perfection seems like an almost impossible task. How can it be done? We must be purified before we achieve union with God, either in this life or the next. Original and actual sins stain us; they soil our souls. As I discussed in my paper *The Sacraments of Initiation*, the purification process begins at our Baptism. At that time we became temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity came to dwell in our souls. At this time God the Father adopted us as his sons and daughters, which makes us brothers and sisters to his son Jesus. However, because of the consequences of Original Sin, Baptism did not restore us completely to the Original Holiness and Justice possessed by Adam and Eve. This is true because of our diminished intellect, weakened wills, and our urge to sin called concupiscence. Just as we must be purified in Purgatory before we can experience union or intimate friendship with God in Heaven, we must be purified before we can achieve a closer union with him in this life as well. To experience union with God, one must become holy—to become more like Jesus.

We grow in holiness only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world. God gives only in proportion to our ability to receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace. We can only go so far, though, in the purification of our souls by activities we perform; the rest is up to God.

It would require a paper at least as long as this one to explain the process of achieving union with God in this life and the next. This subject is known as spiritual theology and is discussed in the last section of this essay under *Prayer and Holiness*. The secret is how can we become detached to the things of this world and attached to the things of God? Detachment is needed to achieve holiness. To be holy requires that we rid ourselves of sin, imperfections, and needless attachments to the things of this world. In other words, if we desire to be holy we must detach ourselves from anything that doesn't lead to God. The objective is to empty ourselves of selfishness, greed, lust, hatred, anger, spiritual laziness, and above all pride so God can fill us with his grace. Moreover, the more we practice the virtues of patience, humility, obedience, and love the holier we will become, and the holier we become the higher we will ascend in our prayer life, and the higher our prayer life the closer we will achieve union—a close friendship—with God. St. Teresa of Avila tells us to be holy keep our thoughts constantly on the vanity of all things and to fix them on eternity and heavenly things. Moreover, cultivate an active prayer life, because prayer furthers detachment and detachment furthers prayer. Persons too much attached to the things of this world, those constantly caught up in the affairs of this world, will never find time for prayer or even see the need for it. There is an old saying that goes “Those who are holy pray and those who pray are holy.”

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St. Teresa especially emphasized the cultivation of the virtue of humility, the greatest of all the virtues, because all of the rest of the virtues depend upon humility. The humble person always puts God first, then his neighbor. The opposite of humility is the greatest sin of all, pride, for wasn't it pride that led to the downfall of first Lucifer and then Adam and Eve? Isn't it pride that causes most of the evil present in the world today as human beings try to play God? St. Teresa believed that pride militated against holiness and stifled prayer life, because proud people believe holiness is a weakness and don't believe they need others, even God.

Sins of Commission and Omission: We sin by sins of commission and omission. A sin of commission is the willful violation of one of God's commandments. A sin of omission is a willful neglect or positive refusal to perform some good action that one's conscience urges one to do. Such omission is morally culpable, and its gravity depends on the importance of what should have been done, on the person's willfulness, and the circumstances of the situation (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*).

THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a prominent theologian of spirituality and renowned spiritual director, tells us in his *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of "oughtness" that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying, "As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both. . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it." Lewis goes on to say, lying "is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act. . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person." I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural. In fact, the existence of the human conscience has been one of many proofs given for God's existence.

I believe that the experience of moral obligation or the existence of conscience is a very important argument for God's existence. There are times when we do things not necessarily required of us or even in our best interest, but we do them because we believe them to be the right thing to do. In fact, it would bother us if we didn't do them. This is the voice of conscience prompting us to do the right thing. What else could explain the phenomena other than a God to whom we are accountable.

Definition of conscience: What is conscience? Where does it come from? The *Catechism* defines conscience as, "a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law" (No. 1778). The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* define conscience as "A judgment of the intellect, dictating what is to be done as morally right, or what is to be avoided as morally wrong, in the particular circumstances in, which one is now placed. Conscience is an act of the virtue of prudence. In that it is concerned with the morality of a particular case, conscience differs from a knowledge of the fundamental principles of right and wrong, and from the understanding of their general conclusions (moral science)."

How we get a conscience: How do we get a conscience? Where does it come from? There appears to me to be two opposite extremes of where conscience comes from: at one end of a continuum or spectrum is instinctive behavior and at the other extreme it is something instilled in us by God. Other possibilities include combinations on the continuum. Without going into the

various possibilities that have been posited for the existence of conscience, I will quote Peter Kreeft, a renowned Catholic philosopher and catechist who teaches at Boston College, who sums up the argument by saying, “Conscience has binding moral authority over us, demanding unqualified obedience. But only a perfectly good, righteous Divine Will has this authority and a right to absolute, exceptionless obedience.” Therefore, he concludes that conscience is the voice of the will of God.

Our conscience is not always right: However, isn’t it true that we don’t always read our consciences correctly? And, of course, that’s true! Our consciences can be wrong. That’s why our first obligation is to form our conscience correctly by seeking the truth—especially the truth about whether God has provided us with clear moral principles. We find these in the Bible and above all in the Church. If so, whenever our conscience appears to be telling us to disobey these principles, our conscience is in error.

We must obey our conscience: But isn’t it true that we are always obligated to obey our consciences? We hear a lot about this among certain Catholics today, especially those politicians who say that they are personally opposed to abortion, but that they have no right to impose their views on others. They claim that it would go against their consciences to do so. And it is true that we should never go against our conscience. Conscience is the absolute moral authority. Kreeft, who is a leading authority on St. Thomas Aquinas, says that St. Aquinas went so far to say that if a Catholic comes to believe that the Church is in error in some essential, officially binding doctrine, it is a mortal sin against conscience, a sin of hypocrisy, for him to remain in the Church and call himself a Catholic. Further yet, it is only a venial sin against knowledge for him to leave the Church in honest but partly culpable error. Nonetheless, this doesn’t free us from forming our consciences properly by seeking the truth of God’s revelation regarding moral matters.

The *Catechism* treats the subject of obeying one’s conscience under the heading “Erroneous Judgment.” It says that “A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed” (No. 1790). Furthermore, the *Catechism* states, “This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man ‘takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin.’ In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits” (No. 1791). According to the *Modern Catholic Dictionary* culpable means “Morally responsible for an evil action. Culpability assumes sufficient awareness and (internal) consent to the evil done. It is identified with formal guilt or sin.”

Elsewhere the *Catechism* says, “Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one’s passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church’s authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct” (No. 1792). The *Catechism* goes on to say in the next paragraph that “If—on the contrary—the ignorance is invincible, or the moral subject

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is not responsible for his erroneous judgment, the evil committed by the person cannot be imputed to him. It remains no less an evil, a privation, a disorder. One must therefore work to correct the errors of moral conscience” (No.1793). In other words, if one is in doubt whether something is wrong or not, he or she is obligated to find out the truth of the matter, that is, what the Church teaches on the subject in question. To conclude this subject, the *Catechism* tells us that “A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for charity proceeds at the same time ‘from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. . . . The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective standards of moral conduct” (No. 1794).

Vincible and Invincible Ignorance: The *Catechism* mentions invincible ignorance. This must be contrasted with vincible ignorance. The *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines vincible ignorance as a:

Lack of knowledge for which a person is morally responsible. It is culpable ignorance because it could be cleared up if the person used sufficient diligence. One is said to be simply (but culpably) ignorant if one fails to make enough effort to learn what should be known; guilt then depends on one's lack of effort to clear up the ignorance. That person is crassly ignorant when the lack of knowledge is not directly willed but rather due to neglect or laziness; as a result the guilt is somewhat lessened, but in grave matters a person would still be gravely responsible. A person has affected ignorance when one deliberately fosters it in order not to be inhibited in what one wants to do; such ignorance is gravely wrong when it concerns serious matters.

In other words, one having vincible ignorance about a matter of moral conduct should know better; they have no acceptable excuse for not knowing better. This applies especially to pro-abortion Catholic politicians. They can't hide behind their consciences, because they either know what the Church teaches about the sanctity of human life or have the obligation to find out. In other words, they have an obligation to properly form their consciences. I suspect Hell is full of people who went there with a “clear” conscience.

On the other hand, invincible ignorance is defined as a “Lack of knowledge, either of fact or law, for which a person is not morally responsible. This may be due to the difficulty of the object of the knowledge, or scarcity of evidence, or insufficient time or talent in the person, or any other factor for which he is not culpable.” Essentially invincible ignorance is a lack of knowledge a person possesses who doesn't know any better regarding a matter of morality. Even though the acts he performs are intrinsically evil, his ignorance lessens his culpability or degree of guilt. Only God can judge a person's degree of guilt, of course.

THE THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL VIRTUES

We have been saying quite a bit about virtues. What are virtues? How does living virtuous lives contribute to achieving holiness and union with God? Living virtuous lives is the way to achieve holiness. Only Jesus lived a life of perfect virtue and holiness and he is the standard by which we should observe when trying to be perfect as is his heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48).

Virtues are good habits whereas vices are bad habits. Habit means the ease, readiness, satisfaction, and effectiveness with which human actions are performed. Virtues reside in the faculties of the mind and will and may be acquired by personal effort or infused by God.

Natural Virtues: Those virtues that we acquire by personal effort or repetition are called natural virtues. Even persons without God's grace can live virtuous lives at the natural level. Infused virtues, on the other hand, are good habits infused in our souls by God to “dispose us to act in accordance to the dictates of reason enlightened by faith.” Their possession enables persons to live virtuous lives at the supernatural level. Fr. Jordon Aumann says that their purpose is “to supernaturalize the faculties [of intellect and will] by elevating them to the order of grace and making them capable of performing supernatural acts. Without them, or without the actual grace that substitutes for them (as in the case of the sinner before justification), it would be impossible for us to perform a supernatural act” (*Spiritual Theology*).

The Theological Virtues: God infuses theological virtues directly into the soul. Their immediate object is God. We first receive them at Baptism. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. Their possession gives a person immediate union with God. It is said “Faith enables us to know God as First Truth; hope makes us desire him as the Supreme Good for us; charity unites us to him by the love of friendship, so far as he is infinite Goodness.” Another way at looking at the Theological Virtues is:

- Faith is the supernatural virtue by which we believe all the truths, which God has revealed.
- Hope is the supernatural virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us Heaven in the life to come and will provide in this life the means to reach Heaven.
- Charity is the supernatural virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake and our neighbor as ourselves, even as he has loved us.

What is the relationship among the three Theological Virtues? They are separate virtues, because as Fr. Aumann says “faith can exist without hope and charity (as in one who commits a mortal sin of despair without losing his faith); charity will endure [endure] eternally in heaven, separate from faith and hope, which will have disappeared (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8); and finally, in this life faith and hope can subsist without charity, as always happens when one commits a mortal sin not directly opposed to faith or hope.”

Faith is considered the first of the virtues, because in order of origin, faith is the first theological

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virtue that we experience, then hope, followed by charity. We must first have faith because it is the foundation of hope and both of these are required to have charity.

Love is the most perfect of the virtues: Speaking of the virtues, St. Paul tells us that the most perfect and the “greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13: 13), because “it unites us most intimately with God and is the only one of the three that perdures [continues] in eternity.” Fr. Aumann tells us that charity is “the measure of supernatural perfection so that one who has attained the perfection of the love of God and of neighbor can be called perfect in the truest sense of the word.” Moreover, he says, “Charity establishes the mutual love of friendship between God and ourselves”; it unites us to God. Moreover, it involves love as neighbor as we love ourselves. St. John tells us that God is love (John 4:8); therefore, when he dwells in our souls, when we love, it is God loving through us.

Love is the greatest of the virtues, because the other virtues depend upon love. St. Paul says of love (charity, *agape*):

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 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. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (Corinthians 13).

The *Catechism* says of charity: “The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which ‘binds everything together in perfect harmony’; it is the form of the virtues; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love” (No. 1827). Furthermore, “The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest” (No. 1829).

The Moral Virtues: In addition to the Theological Virtues there are the Moral Virtues. The Moral Virtues can be either infused by God or acquired by repetition. That is, they can be either natural or supernatural. As we discussed in *The Sacraments of Initiation*, the moral virtues are

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first infused into our souls at Baptism. However, they can also be acquired by repetition. Whereas the infused Theological Virtues have as their object God, the natural or acquired moral virtues have as their object human activities that lead to God. They are acquired virtues, because they develop as the result of human effort and repetition. They are learned habits that dispose the faculties (intellect and free will) of man to follow the dictate of reason.

As I have said, the moral virtues can be either infused (supernatural) or natural (acquired by repetition). The infused moral virtues have been defined as “habits that dispose the faculties of man to follow the dictate of reason illumined by faith in relation to the means that lead to the supernatural end.” The natural moral virtues are those we learn by repetition or habit.

The Cardinal Virtues are the main categories of the Moral Virtues. They are Prudence; Justice; Temperance; and Fortitude. Cardinal derives from the Latin *cardo*, which means hinge. By cardinal is meant they are primary to human conduct and other virtues flow from them or hinge on them. As we said above, the Moral Virtues can be either learned or infused. I will discuss each of the Cardinal Virtues, in turn. The source of this discussion is Fr. Hardon's acclaimed *The Catholic Catechism*.

- **Prudence:** Prudence is the virtue of the mind that enables one to decide what is the right thing to do in a given situation. Complementary virtues are **good counsel**, from which one can profit from the advice of others; **common sense**, which judges things in accordance with ordinary rules of conduct; and **good judgment**.
- **Justice:** Justice is the virtue that constantly disposes one to give everyone, including God, his or her due. It involves giving someone what they deserve; what they have coming, what they have earned. Complementary virtues are **obedience**, which means to obey those in rightful authority; **truthfulness**, which means to tell things as they really are; **gratitude** for benefits received; **zeal** to protect from evil; **restitution** to repair injuries; and **religion** with which to worship God. Religion is giving God his due, what he deserves.
- **Temperance:** Temperance is the virtue that enables one to use according to right reason the things that are pleasant and agreeable to the senses. Complementary virtues are **abstinence**, which is moderation in food and drink for one's spiritual good; **sobriety**, which regulates one's food and drink according to right reason; **diligence**, which regulates the desire for ease and comfort; **chastity**, which controls desire for sexual pleasure in conformance with reason; **clemency**, which remits punishment for the guilty; **meekness**, which restrains anger; **modesty**, which controls the affections and bodily movements; **moderation**, which tempers curiosity and excessive desire for knowledge; and **humility**, with which one considers oneself to be small and undeserving of praise and recognition.
- **Fortitude:** Fortitude is the virtue that inspires one to undergo suffering and to undertake difficult tasks. Complementary virtues are **magnanimity**, which inclines one to heroic

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virtue; **magnificence**, which inclines one to do great things; **patience**, which keeps one's soul at peace in spite of opposition or difficulty; and **perseverance**, which enables one to pursue good causes to completion. Actually there are many other virtues that flow from the Cardinal Virtues. I have read that over seventy have been identified, but I have never seen such a list.

The Vices (Bad Habits): We have been looking at good habits, but how about bad habits? When we fail to practice virtues, that is good moral habits, we are in danger of replacing them with the opposite bad habits or vices. Bad habits are called vices. One or a few bad acts of a particular kind do not make a vice or bad habit; but a continual practice of particular bad acts becomes habitual, therefore a vice. There exists what are called the Capital Sins. If these were practiced on a regular basis, they would become Capital Vices.

When we fail to practice virtues, that is good moral habits, we are in danger of replacing them with the opposite bad habits or vices. Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the capital sins, which Christian experience has distinguished. They are called "capital" because they cause other sins or other vices. The virtues and their opposite vices are listed below. Although there is a difference between sin and vices, they are often used interchangeably.

Capital Sins (Vices if performed habitually) Corresponding Virtue

Pride	Humility
Avarice	Generosity
Lust	Chastity
Anger	Meekness
Gluttony	Temperance
Envy	Brotherly Love
Sloth	Diligence

Pride: The Sin of Pride consists of:

- A lack of humility.
- In entertaining too great an opinion of ourselves, or in valuing ourselves above our deserts.
- In publishing what we think good in ourselves, that we may be esteemed by others.
- In arrogance, by attributing to ourselves the good we don't have.
- In presumption and ambition, by confiding too much in our own strength, conceiving ourselves capable of accomplishing things above our abilities, and in rashly attempting them.
- In contempt of others, on account of the good opinions we have of ourselves, and when this contempt is manifested by words or actions or by being severe and exacting on inferiors.

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- In lack of submission to our superiors, by disobeying them, blaming their conduct, or murmuring against them.
- In not acknowledging our faults; or when, in confessing the facts, we maintain we have done well, or at least allege false excuses.
- In contempt of admonitions and corrections.
- In discord.
- In hypocrisy, that is saying one thing and doing another.
- In curiosity, which inclines us to know things prejudicial to our salvation.
- By ingratitude for God's benefits.

Gluttony: The Sin of Gluttony consists of:

In eating or drinking to excess, as far as they are detrimental, either to our health or our reason, or any ways scandalous, or of bad example to others.

Envy: The Sin of Envy consists of:

- Troubled at the good success of our neighbor, or when we endeavor to do him unkindness, or speak often against him, or create an ill opinion of him in the mind of another.
- When we rejoice at our neighbor's harm.
- When we desire something that belongs to another: authority; prestige; privilege; property, etc.

Anger: The Sin of Anger consists of:

- Not to endure any thing contrary to our inclinations.
- To suffer ourselves to be hurried away by the emotions of wrath against those that give us any trouble.
- To proceed to quarrels, injurious language, oaths, curses, threats; to take revenge, or to desire and wish to be in a capacity of exercising it.
- To refuse to pardon injuries, or to be reconciled to our enemies, or to such of our neighbors with whom we have had some misunderstanding, or falling out.

Greed: The Sin of Greed or Avarice consists of:

- The desire to amass earthly goods without limit.
- The desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods.

Covetousness: The Sin of Covetousness consists of:

- To desire that which belongs to another.
- An unreasonable love of temporal goods
- To desire wealth for its own sake or just for the pleasures and honors it will bring.

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- To seek riches in an excessive manner, i.e., with no regard for the rights of others, or for one's own health or that of one's employees.

Sloth: The Sin of Sloth consists of:

- Laziness or idleness, especially of a spiritual nature.
- A turning away from one's good because of the effort needed to attain it.
- Neglecting a grave responsibility to look out for one's religious obligations or the welfare of one's dependents.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Another help essential in leading holy and virtuous lives are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Together with the infused Theological and Moral virtues, a person in the state of sanctifying grace possesses the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of which Isaiah says “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:1-2). By the shoot of the stump of Jesse, Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah, the Christ (*Christos*) Jesus Christ. Jesse was David’s father, and Isaiah was prophesying that the Messiah would be a descendent of David of the tribe of Judah.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are “permanent dispositions in the soul which give the it the ability to respond quickly and with ease to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. They are called Gifts because they are given to the soul with grace at Baptism and Confirmation” (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*). The *Catechism* says that they are “permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1830). The gifts “belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David” (No. 1831).

All Christians in God's friendship possess the gifts, which are dispensed by Jesus Christ to his brothers and sisters. The Gifts are infused by the Holy Spirit. In this regard, St. Paul says, “Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God” (Romans 8:14). The infused gifts of the Holy Spirit disposes the just souls to be moved in accordance with God's will.

What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and what does each mean? The gifts are seven in all, beginning with:

- **Knowledge:** Knowledge involves knowing the truths of the Faith. Fr. Jordan Aumann says that knowledge helps “to judge rightly concerning the truths of faith in accordance with their proper causes and the principles of revealed truth.” Fr. John Hardon says of knowledge, that it “enables us, through some form of relish and warmth of charity, to judge everything from a supernatural viewpoint by means of lesser causes. Closely tied in with this gift is the lesson of past experience, after a person has reamed the emptiness of things created and the hollowness of sin.””
- **Understanding:** Fr. Aumann says that understanding “gives us a deeper insight and penetration of divine truths held by faith, not as a short-lived enlightenment, but as a permanent insight.” Fr. Hardon tells us that understanding is a “supernatural enlightenment given to the mind for grasping revealed truths easily and profoundly.” It gives us insight into the meaning of what we believe.
- **Wisdom:** Of wisdom, Fr. Aumann says that it gives us the ability to “judge and order all things in accordance with divine norms [rules] and with a connaturality [inborn] that flows from loving union with God.” Fr. Hardon says of wisdom, “it makes the soul

responsive to the Holy Spirit in the contemplation [given to us by God] of divine things and in the use, so to speak, of God's ideas for evaluating every contingency [possibility] in the secular and spiritual order.” Wisdom gives us a certain divine contemplation of the truths contained in the articles of the Creed.

- **Counsel:** Fr. Aumann states that counsel renders “the individual docile [easy to teach] and receptive to the counsel of God regarding one’s actions in view of sanctification and salvation.” Fr. Hardon states that counsel “is a special gift that assists the mind and perfects the virtue of prudence by enlightening a man on how to decide and command individual supernatural acts . . . Its proper object is the right ordering of particular actions, after the gifts of knowledge and understanding furnish the general principles.”
- **Piety:** According to Fr. Aumann piety gives “filial worship to God precisely as our Father and to relate with all people as children of the same Father.” Fr. Hardon says that piety “aids and supplements the virtue of justice by disposing us to show reverence for God as a most loving Father and for men as the sons of God.”” This gift helps us not only to show reverence to God our Heavenly Father, but also to honor our parents and show respect to our neighbors who are our brothers and sisters.
- **Fortitude:** Fr. Aumann tells us that fortitude helps us “overcome difficulties or to endure pain and suffering with the strength and power infused by God.” Fr. Hardon says that fortitude “goes beyond fortitude as a virtue by carrying to a successful conclusion even the most difficult tasks in the service of God.” Fortitude helps us “to undertake arduous tasks and to endure long and trying difficulties for the divine glory.” It helps us to carry on in the face of criticism and helps us to persevere in the practice of virtue in spite of oppressive odds. Moreover, it aids us in facing unexpected trials, such as sickness, persecution, and external failure.
- **Fear of the Lord:** Fear of the Lord according to Fr. Aumann causes us “to avoid sin and attachment to created things out of reverence and love of God.” According to Fr. Hardon it contains “the virtue of hope and impels a man to a profound respect for the majesty of God. Its correlative effects are protection from sin through dread of offending the Lord, and a strong confidence in the power of his help.”

Why the Gifts are needed: Why are the gifts needed in addition to the virtues? Fr. Hardon says that, because of our fallen human nature, our minds and wills, helped by God's grace working through our virtues, are often not enough to overcome the problems or difficulties that we face in our lives, but necessitate additional help of the gifts. He says of this matter:

[The Gifts lie] in the need for having a supernatural counterpart for the natural instincts of mind and will. Even the infused virtues are not enough. They do not, by themselves, so perfect a man on the road to heaven that he has no further need of being moved by the yet higher promptings of the Holy Spirit. For whether we consider human reason and will in

their natural powers alone, or as elevated by the theological virtues, they are still very fallible and require help: wisdom against folly, understanding against dullness, counsel against rashness, fortitude against fears, knowledge against ignorance, piety against hardness of heart, and fear of God against pride. The gifts of the Holy Spirit supply this help by giving us remedies against these defects and making us amenable to the promptings of his grace" (The Catholic *Catechism*). Therefore, both the gifts and the virtues are needed for salvation.

Differences between the Gifts and the Virtues: What are the difference between gifts and virtues? According to Fr. Aumann, there are several differences between the gifts and the virtues:

- The infused virtues operate under the control of the individual's reason illumined by faith and prompted by actual grace. On the other hand, only the Holy Spirit can actuate the gifts, to put them into operation.
- Since the infused virtues operate under the direction and control of reason illumined by faith, their operations are confined to the strictly human level. On the other hand, since the gifts have the Holy Spirit as their cause, they operate at the divine or supernatural level.
- The soul is fully active in the exercise of the infused virtues; the soul's acts are produced in a human manner and it is fully conscious that it works when and how it pleases. On the other hand, the exercise of the gifts is entirely different. The Holy Spirit is the unique cause of the gifts; the soul is receptive, though remains conscious and free. Thus we preserve freedom and merit under the operation of the gifts, but the soul merely agrees with the divine action, which belongs entirely to the Holy Spirit.

As with the Theological and Moral Virtues, the only thing that we would like to emphasize before we go on to the Fruits of the Holy Spirit is that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are first infused into us at Baptism.

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fruits of the Holy Spirit are defined in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* as “Virtuous acts which are performed under the influence of grace and which are accompanied by a certain spiritual joy.” The *Encyclopedic Dictionary* further states that “They are called Fruits of the Holy Spirit because they are the products of grace, which is given by the Holy Spirit.” Moreover, “In the beginning, virtuous acts are frequently difficult and distasteful. But with the practice of virtue such acts become easier and are accompanied by a pleasure or spiritual joy; then acts of virtue are called fruits.”

St. Paul (Galatians 5:22) enumerates nine fruits: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, modesty, and continency. In some Latin translations of this Epistle, three additional fruits have been added to the list, bringing the total to twelve. The *Baltimore Catechism*, following the *Challoner Rheims New Testament*, lists twelve fruits. However, the enumeration of Paul was not meant to be complete, the number nine being symbolic. A fruit is in reality any virtuous deed in which one delights. As we become holy and make use of our virtues and the seven gifts, we will see certain effects taking place in our lives. These effects are called the “Fruits of the Holy Spirit.” In line with what we have just said, the Church has identified twelve fruits, which we will list, in turn.

1. **Charity:** love for God and others
2. **Joy:** happiness in living the Christian life
3. **Peace:** inner calmness, even in difficulties
4. **Patience:** kindly putting up with the faults of others
5. **Kindness:** concern for the needs of others
6. **Goodness:** setting a good example in all that we do
7. **Continence:** the proper balance in our desire for pleasure
8. **Mildness:** (Meekness): being gentle towards others in words and deeds
9. **Fidelity:** being loyal to God and the people we are committed to
10. **Longsuffering:** an extraordinary patience in enduring suffering
11. **Modesty:** having respect for ourselves and others in conversation, dress, etc.
12. **Chastity:** proper attitude toward others and control over our sexual desires

THE CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

We demonstrate our love and devotion to God by practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. They are the heart of moral behavior. The Corporal Works of Mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in bodily necessities” (*Catechism*, No. 2447). The Corporal Works of Mercy are as follows: feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; visit the imprisoned; shelter the homeless; visit the sick; and bury the dead. Giving alms to the poor also covers many of the particular Corporal Works of Mercy. The Spiritual Works of Mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in spiritual necessities” (*Catechism*, No. 2447). They are actions that help our neighbors achieve Heaven. The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are as follows: 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. Performing the works of mercy fulfills the requirements of the second table of the Ten Commandments, the commandments dealing with love of neighbor.

The Corporal Works of Mercy: The *Catechism* states that the Corporal Works of Mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in bodily necessities” (No. 2447). They are as follows:

1. **To feed the hungry:** “For I was hungry and you gave me to eat” (Matthew 25:35). We must never turn away anyone who is hungry. Those in authority should prevent unemployment as best they can. Giving work is the best means for removing the necessity of feeding the unemployed. Saint Louis IX of France, a contemporary of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Dominic, provided daily food to the poor, and often served them himself. Many charitable people today, especially the religious institutions, Catholic Charities and the like, feed the hungry. Lay people can help out best by giving work to all they can afford to help; work is better for the able-bodied than direct alms-giving.
2. **To give drink to the thirsty:** “I was thirsty and you gave me to drink...” (Matthew 25:35). Our Lord says that a cup of cold water given in his name shall not go unrewarded (Mark 9:40). Giving medicine belongs to this work of mercy. Those who construct reservoirs, or who purify public drinking water in third world countries are fulfilling the requirement to give drink to the thirsty.
3. **To clothe the naked:** “I was...naked and you clothed me...” (Matthew 25:36). Many make a practice of giving clothes to the poor; other gifts belong to this kind of alms. The story of Saint Martin, giving half his cloak to a beggar, exemplifies this work of mercy.
4. **To visit the imprisoned:** “I was in prison and you came to me.” (Matthew. 25:36). Those who visit the prisoners in jails and give them instruction and material help are doing a work of mercy. In the Middle Ages the Order of Ransom was founded for the ransom of Christians held captive by the Turks. It is said that more than a million Christians were thus ransomed, either with money, or by others taking their place. In the 19th century

Cardinal Lavignerie established the Order of the White Fathers, aimed at freeing slaves in Africa. If it isn't practical to visit the imprisoned, one could write them or become a pen pal to a prisoner or one could provide books or magazines for them to read or study. Above all, one could pray for their conversion. Although St. Therese of Lisieux never visited a prison, she constantly prayed for the conversion of criminals.

5. **To shelter the homeless:** "I was a stranger and you took me in..." (Matthew 25:35). Those who do this work of mercy are like the Good Samaritan. Those who provide clean and comfortable homes for the poor at low rates of rent practice this work of mercy. Saint Paul said: "Hospitality do not forget; for by this some, not being aware of it, have entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). In olden times travelers stopped for the night or for food in the monasteries. In the Alps, the monks of Saint Bernard perform this work of mercy when they rescue, with the aid of their famous breed of dogs, travelers who have met with accidents. Providing alms to Catholic Charities, the Light House Mission, or the Salvation Army who help shelter the homeless or providing gifts to Hurricane or Tsunami relief are call examples of helping to shelter the homeless. Those who contribute their time to building homes for Habitat for Mankind are helping to shelter the homeless.
6. **To visit the sick:** "I was sick and you cared for me..." (Matthew 25:36). When we visit the sick, in order to give them temporal or spiritual relief, we do an act of mercy. To build, support, or aid a hospital or a patronage for the sick is a most meritorious act of charity. Doctors and nurses who perform their duties to please God and the benefit their neighbor will be rewarded in Heaven. Several religious orders have been founded for the express purpose of taking care of the sick, such as the orders founded by Saint John of God and Saint Vincent de Paul. Mother St. Francesca Cabrini helped found numerous hospitals in the Western Hemisphere for the needy. Rose Hawthorne, daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne and a convert to Catholicism, started the Hawthorne Dominicans and built hospitals to care for cancer victims. Visiting the elderly and the sick in their homes and in nursing homes is another meritorious way to fulfill this work of mercy.
7. **To bury the dead:** "Amen, I say to you, insofar as you did it for one of these least of my brothers, you did it for me." (Matthew 25:40). To attend a funeral, visit a house of mourning, or aid the bereaved family, are works of merit. Other corporal works of mercy are: helping out during a fire or accident, rescuing one in danger of death, etc. Every word or act done in the name of or for the sake of Christ is a work of mercy, and will be rewarded.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy: The *Catechism* says that the Spiritual Works of Mercy are "charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in spiritual necessities" (No. 2447). They are actions that help our neighbors achieve Heaven. They are as follows:

1. **To admonish the sinner:** "...there will be more joy in Heaven at the repentance of one sinner than at ninety-nine of the righteous who had no need of repentance." (Luke 15:7). Whenever we think our words may have a good effect, we should not hesitate to admonish

the erring prudently. Those in authority, such as parents and teachers, are bound to admonish those under them of their faults, even if in doing so they bring trouble upon themselves. Good example is another way of admonition. In admonishing sinners, we must do so with gentleness and charity. Otherwise we might only produce results the opposite of what we wish. It would be wrong, if with a little trouble we could save a sinner from sin, did we not speak to save him; it would, moreover, be a loss of great grace for ourselves. “He who causes a sinner to be brought back from his misguided way, will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

2. **To instruct the ignorant:** “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” (Matthew 16:15). Missionaries, catechists, confessors. Christian writers and teachers—all who teach religion or other useful knowledge—are doing an important work of mercy, and will receive a reward. “They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity” (cf. Daniel 12:3). Those who collect money for foreign missions do a work of mercy.
3. **To counsel the doubtful:** “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you . . . Let not your hearts be troubled . . .” (John 14:27). We should be most zealous in helping those whom a word may save or aid. We should be happy if the word we say helps a doubtful one to become firm in his faith! As in admonishing sinners, advising the doubtful should be done prudently, and gently, to effect good results. It is seldom effective to rush into heated argument. One should pray for guidance before giving counsel. It is especially meritorious to counsel those who have doubts about their faith.
4. **To comfort the sorrowful:** “Come to me, all you grown weary and burdened, and I will refresh you.” (Matthew 11:28). We can comfort the afflicted by showing them sincere sympathy, by suggesting consolations, and by helping them in their need. To comfort the sorrowful is a work of mercy, similar to curing the sick, since grief is a mental and emotional ailment. To give comfort, we may speak of God's providence, of his love for every single one of his creatures, of the happiness he reserves for us in Heaven, when all earthly sorrows and troubles will be ended.
5. **To bear wrongs patiently:** “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you.” (Luke 6:27-28). By being patient with injustice, we benefit both ourselves and our neighbors. Our patience might help them realize their wrongdoing. It is, however, wrong to permit others to falsely accuse us of a serious crime and not defend ourselves. But we should be patient, for love of God.
6. **To forgive all injuries:** “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12). We must not seek revenge. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). We must forgive others, as we hope God will forgive us. Instead of seeking revenge, those who wish to imitate the saints go out of their way to do favors to those who injure them. Like Jesus Christ, they love all men.

7. **To pray for the living and the dead:** “Father, I desire that they, too, may be with me where I am...” (John 17:24). We may not see the effects of our prayers, but God sees. Not one single prayer raised to God from a sincere heart is wasted. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Prayers do good not only to those we pray for, but for those who do the praying.

Jesus summarizes the heart and the necessity of the works of mercy in the following quotation taken from the Gospel of Matthew:

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46).

For reward for good works see Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8).

This is how we will be judged at our particular judgment when the curtain that separates us from God will be lifted at our deaths and Jesus will be sitting on his throne to judge us, or rather to confirm the judgment that we have passed on ourselves. Here we are talking about how our personal morality is inextricably bound together with our social morality. We cannot get to Heaven unless we are socially moral, which means to practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with regard to social morality; that is, to practice the Church's social doctrines. The Church's social doctrines are based on love of neighbor. See our essay on the Church's social doctrines in *Social Justice* in the website.

One simply can't understand the Church's social doctrines without an understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Fall, the Redemption, the Incarnation, and Grace, because they provide the basis for why all human beings possess worth and dignity and are to be loved and

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cared for. We are to love and care for others, because all of us are created in God's image and likeness and redeemed by Christ after the Fall, the Son of God the Father became man and redeemed us on the Cross. When Jesus Christ became man and dwelled among us, he elevated the image of man to the supernatural level. When we possess sanctifying grace we too can live at the supernatural level, because the Trinity dwells in our souls, and as a result, be members of God's family. To attain and maintain sanctifying grace and to grow in holiness, we must love God with our entire heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves; better yet, as Jesus loves us. We must do everything for God's glory and to benefit others. Among the ways we benefit others is to perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We simply cannot become holy and virtuous persons and achieve union with God in this and the next life unless we practice them.

LIVING HOLY AND VIRTUOUS LIVES

Mother Angelica of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) used to begin her weekly live broadcast with the statement, “We are all called to be great saints.” This echoes the call to holiness that the Catholic Church has made to the People of God down through the ages. First Jesus called his followers to holiness and when he ascended into Heaven his Apostles continued to call them. In the centuries that followed, the Fathers of the Church repeatedly called Christians to holiness, as did numerous Church councils. For instance, Vatican Council II states “He [God] has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness,” (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church or *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II, “The People of God” 9). Pope John Paul II, who repeatedly preached this theme, said in his General Audience on November 24, 1993 that, “The Church is holy and all her members are called to holiness.”

Prior to Vatican II it was assumed that achieving the height of holiness was for cloistered nuns and monks who lived their lives in accordance with the Evangelical Counsels of strict poverty, chastity, and obedience. It was believed that perfect holiness could be achieved only by persons isolated from the attractions and distractions of the world. The great majority of persons outside the cloister who had to constantly fight the world, the flesh, and the devil would have to be satisfied with achieving something much less than perfection. This ignored the fact that countless holy persons over the ages, such as St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Lisieux, had taught that the spiritual life associated with prayer and holiness is something that we are all called to—adults, children, and teen-agers alike—and not something reserved only for the religious. Reflecting the change in attitude of the Church after Vatican II, the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church states "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity . . . All are called to holiness . . . Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (No. 2013). Jesus says the words about the perfection of his Father in Matthew 5:48 at the end of the Sermon on the Mount; therefore, as I indicated elsewhere the Sermon is our principal guide to holiness.

The question is: What is holiness? Only God is holy and we are holy only to the extent that God lives in our souls. God is holy, because he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; we possess them only by sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us. We have God’s life in us when the Trinity dwells in our souls. Baptism washes away the stain of Original Sin and makes us Temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity. I want to emphasize that grace is not God; it is his life within us; it is our participation in his life, our participation in the inner life of the Trinity. As we discussed in my essay *The Sacraments of Initiation*, sanctifying grace restores the holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, of being made holy. It makes us sons and daughters of God the Father, brothers and sisters of his son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven.

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However, we do not become automatically heirs to Heaven for we will have to pass the test of our love and devotion to God every day of our lives. The wills of Jesus and the Father are in perfect harmony. We are all called to be great saints, which means to be holy, to be like Jesus. We become holy only to the extent that we bring our wills into conformance with the divine wills. Jesus provides us through his Church the means with which to achieve holiness.

The holiness we receive at baptism is just a start to our growth in holiness. Let's use an analogy I used in The Sacraments of Initiation to illustrate our point. Let's imagine that our souls are like containers that when full will hold only so much grace. By grace I mean God's presence in our souls. This means at baptism the container holds all of the grace that one is capable of holding at that moment, all of the presence of God that our souls are capable of holding. However, since God is infinite there is still room for indefinite increases of his grace, his presence in us. This means that the size of the container can grow as we grow in holiness, as we acquire more of God's life in us. Assuming that we are in the state of sanctifying grace at our deaths, the size of the container, that is the amount of grace that we possess at that time, will determine the amount of happiness that we will forever experience in Heaven.

Specifically, what does a growth of grace involve? Of course, God does not grow in us; he is infinite; he has no potential for growth. In Scholastic terms he is pure act, he simply is, with no potency, no potential for growth. If God could grow, he wouldn't be perfect. So what does it mean to say that we grow in God's grace? My way of conceptualizing a growth in grace is that growing in grace means a fuller participation in God's life, the life of the Trinity. When the Trinity dwells in our souls we are said to be in a state of sanctifying grace; God's life is within us and we can participate in his life. In fact, we can't grow in grace without possessing sanctifying grace; our good deeds have no merit without grace.

Practically speaking, the growth in holiness means that as one becomes more holy, he or she acquires more of the infused theological virtues of Faith, Hope Charity, more of the moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude and the many virtues that flow from them, more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, and the others. At Baptism God infuses into our souls the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. As I discussed above in this essay, these are known as the Theological virtues. However, during the early times of our lives these virtues lie dormant and the capacity for growth increases as we grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and above all spiritually. In other words, the size of our containers are expanding as well. This gives us the capacity for more grace, more Faith, Hope, and above all Love, love of God and neighbor.

Furthermore, at Baptism we receive an infusion of the moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude and all of the virtues that flow from them. These are called the Cardinal virtues, because all of the other virtues hinge on them. Although these virtues exist and operate at the natural level, which is the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts, they are also infused virtues existing and operating at the supernatural level when we possess God's grace. Moreover, at Baptism we receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are Knowledge,

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Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The Sacrament of Confirmation is like a booster shot that reinforces and raises these gifts even to a higher level.

In summary, the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity were first infused into our souls at Baptism and further augmented at confirmation. Furthermore, the Cardinal virtues were introduced into our souls at Baptism to supplement the natural virtues that we develop by habitually performing them. Moreover, first at Baptism and then at Confirmation we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit to supplement the infused virtues. All of these contribute to our living virtuous and holy lives.

Although God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lives in friendship with us from the time of our Baptism, like all friendships, it must be cultivated. We must spend a lifetime developing our friendship with God. The closer our friendship with him, the more he will increasingly make us aware of his presence and the more firm will be our faith in him and his promises, for he will infuse into our souls the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

As I said at the beginning of this discussion, this is my way of conceptualizing a growth in Sanctifying Grace. As we grow in God's grace, we achieve more of the Theological virtues, the Cardinal virtues, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. When one achieves these virtue and gifts at a high level, with the help of God's grace, he or she is said to be living a life of heroic virtue. The main thing that is investigated at causes for beatification and canonization is the degree that one has lived a life of heroic virtue.

Achieving holiness isn't easy in this wicked world. The Catholic Church provides us with the weapons with which to do battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. As we discussed earlier, our journey toward achieving holiness begins with our Baptism. The sacrament removes the stain of Original Sin and infuses us with sanctifying grace. To sanctify means to make holy, so sanctifying grace makes us holy. The other sacraments provide us with the means to achieving greater holiness. After our Baptism, as we become more holy, we grow in friendship with God and God increasingly communes with us in increasingly more intimate ways. Nonetheless, we shall never see God totally as he is—the Beatific Vision—until we are completely purged of our unholiness, which for most of us will not happen until our deaths and cleansing in Purgatory, for nothing unclean shall enter the Kingdom Heaven (Revelation 21:27).

Now that we have found out what holiness is and the growth in holiness, how do we go about achieving holiness and union with God? God made us to know, love, and serve him in this life so we can be happy with him in Heaven in the next life. We must first know him to love and serve him. The more we know him the more we can do these things. We cannot know God directly because of our fallen natures, which makes it harder to know him. We must spend a lifetime getting to know him better. We get to know him better by utilizing the means provided by Jesus with which to achieve union with God. We get to know God better by:

- Studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings)
- Receiving the sacraments frequently; the principal means of his grace

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- Living virtuous lives; the way to holiness
- Prayer; the way to communicate with him
- Penance; the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others
- Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the way to show our love for him.

Go to *The Universal Call to Holiness* in this website for a more detailed discussion on practical advice on how to perform each of these activities in order to achieve union with God in this life and the next. We also examine how to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil, when we offered some advice on how to purify the senses and the faculties of the soul. Getting to know and serve God better all boils down to loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strengths for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy is the principal way to show our love for him.

THE NATURAL LAW AND PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHIES

The natural law flows from the eternal law. Fr. John Hardon, who was one of the world's greatest theologians and catechists until his death in 2000, says that the natural law is “what God has produced in the world of creation; as coming to human beings, it is what they know (or can know) of what God has created. It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” The Bible refers to the Natural Law in several places. For example, St Paul wrote in Romans 2:14-15 that, “When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” He is here, of course, referring to the natural law. Furthermore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites that God’s law is already in their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14) The prophet Jeremiah said regarding the natural law, “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Moreover, extra-biblical sources include St Thomas Aquinas who refers several places to the law of God written on the human heart and Pope John Paul quotes St Paul’s Romans text in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* in connection with his discussion of the natural law (No. 46).

Natural law is participation in the eternal law: St. Thomas Aquinas said that, the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law” (*Summa Theologica*, 1a 2ae, quest. 91, art. 2). The eternal law has been defined as “The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” One of the world's leading moral theologians, states that, “Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must somehow derive from it. Another prominent theologian says that “The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law.” The Eternal Law is, also known as Divine Providence, which is “God's all-wise plan for the universe . . . This eternal law embraces both the physical and moral laws. . . .” Thomas said elsewhere that, people are naturally disposed to understand some basic practical principles, which he calls the “primary principles of natural law. Since everyone knows them naturally, no one can make a mistake about them.” A document of Vatican Council II states that, “The Church calls these naturally known principles ‘natural law.’ They are natural in the sense that they are not humanly enacted but are objective principles which originate in human nature” (see *Gaudium et Spes* 16; *Dignitatis Humanae* 14).

Why we fail to interpret the natural law correctly: Even though the natural law is “written on our hearts”—which means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them—we do not always interpret the

natural order correctly, because of our fallen human nature due to Original Sin. As St. Paul tells us, the natural law is “The law of God written on our hearts.” This means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them. However, due to our fallen nature, we do not always interpret the natural order correctly, and when we fail to do so, it causes us and others unhappiness as well as personal and social problems. Due to the fact that fallen human beings do not always properly interpret the natural law, God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, which are nothing more than the codification of the natural law in writing. Moreover, Jesus further developed and perfected them in the Sermon on the Mount.

When we fail to adhere to the natural law, it causes us and others unhappiness, suffering, sorrow, and can even cause death. As consequences of the Fall, our intellects have been darkened or diminished, our wills have been weakened, and concupiscence has brought disorder to our passions. As professor Charles Rice, formerly Professor of Law at Notre Dame, tells us, because of our wounded nature we are inclined to draw “the wrong conclusions in their understanding or application of the secondary principles of the natural law.” For example, people can convince themselves that all kinds of acts are moral, such as lying, stealing, abortion, premarital sex, adultery, gay-lesbian relationships, contraception, assisted suicide, infanticide, euthanasia, and many others are perfectly normal acts, at least in certain circumstances, whereas they are, in fact, serious violations of the natural law, which, of course, is based on God’s Eternal Law. Whether or not people recognize it or not, these acts hurt other people in some way.

We must pay the consequences when we break the natural law: When we humans violate the natural order of things, we must pay the consequences. One cannot lie, cheat, steal, kill, fornicate, or adulterate without creating problems for himself or herself and others any more than he or she can jump off a tall building and violate the law of gravity. Such violations of the natural order have caused untold damage and misery in our world over the centuries. God gave us the commandments to help us control our appetites and passions for our good and the good of others. He is not a killjoy or spoilsport who does not want us to have any fun, for after all, he gave us our appetites, drives, and passions for a reason. Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can be harmful to us and can even threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy in order to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin. When we sin, we abuse them rather than use them for God's glory and the benefit of ourselves and others. To abuse the appetite for food and drink—which is gluttony—or the appetite to procreate—which is lust—harms us and others. Germain Grisez, a prominent moral theologian, says of this matter, “Although we are naturally disposed to know basic practical principles and can make no mistake about them, they are not by themselves sufficient for the judgment of conscience which we must make. Our ultimate end is to share in fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, and we do not judge rightly what to do unless we judge in light of

this end. So we must supplement natural law with faith, by this means drawing on the eternal law in a way that goes beyond reason.”

The natural law is a binding as the Commandments: Although the natural law “is not directly encoded in stone, but written on the flesh of our hearts”, it is as binding on our conscience as is the Ten Commandments. Vatican II teaches us that “human persons find in their conscience a law they do not impose on themselves which demands their obedience: ‘For man has in his heart a law written by God . . .’ This law not only calls the person to do good and avoid evil, but it also when necessary speaks ‘to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that’” (*Gaudium et Spes* 16; see 3-B). Another council document says of the subject: “The Council makes its own the explanation of St. Thomas, that this natural law is the human participation in the eternal law . . . the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective, and universal—whereby God orders, directs, and governs the whole world and the ways of the human community according to the plan of his wisdom and love. God makes man a sharer in this his law, so that, by divine providence's sweet disposing, man can recognize more and more the unchanging truth” (*Dignitatis Humanae* 3). Since the natural law originates in human nature itself—all human beings, of all times and places, of all races and ethnic origins, of all religions—the law written on the heart is “binding and embracing” on all.

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a prominent theologian of spirituality and renowned spiritual director until his death in 2010, tells us in his book *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of “oughtness” that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying, “As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both . . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it.” Lewis goes on to say, lying “is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act. . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person.” I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural. In fact, the existence of the human conscience has been one of many proofs given for God's existence.

St Thomas Aquinas said in his famous *Summa Theologica* that the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law”, the eternal law being defined as, “The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” One of the world's leading moral theologians, states that, “Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must somehow derive from it. Another prom-

inent theologian says that “The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law.” There is a natural physical law, known as scientific law, and a natural moral law.” It is the natural moral law that we are concerned with here. Natural moral law has been defined as, “the prescriptions for human conduct derived from reason as applied to the nature of things.” It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” St. Paul tells us that the natural law is “The law of God written on our hearts”. This means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them. Due to the fact that fallen human beings do not always properly interpret the natural law, God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The natural law has been written in the Ten Commandments, for they are simply the codification of the natural law. Jesus further refined, completed, and perfected the Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospel. God gave us the Commandments for our own good, because when we break them we cause ourselves and others harm and unhappiness. Just as one can’t defy the laws of gravity by jumping off of the Empire State Building without harming himself, we can’t break the Commandments without harming ourselves and others. God wants us to love all human beings, including ourselves, as he loves us, because he created us in his very image and likeness and loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for us. All personal and social morality is based on this concept. The natural law is mediated through our conscience.

Unfortunately, many if not most people believe that the natural law deals primarily with sexual morality, but this is hardly the case. I’ve read that if one looks at any standard volume on ethics written from a traditional natural law theory point of view, he or she will find that “it deals with sexual morality at no greater length than it treats of other moral topics, such as capital punishment, war and peace, property rights, social justice, and so forth”. He goes on to say that, “That reflects the natural law view that sexual activity, however important, is just one relatively small part of life among others, not the be all and end all of our existence. However, for our purposes here I’ll deal with sexual morality as determined by the natural law, leaving other moral topics for another time and place. Before I do that, let’s look at the Aristotelian-Thomistic Four Causes applied to Natural Law.

Aristotelian-Thomistic Four Causes applied to Natural Law

A cause is something, such as a person or condition that is responsible for producing an effect or consequence. For centuries there existed a method of ascertaining the cause of things, which accounted for all aspects of their existence. I believe it was first the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle who formulated the method and it was refined in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics or Schoolmen, especially St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.

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In the history of philosophy numerous explanations have been given to account for causation. The most famous and lasting of these was Aristotle's in the fourth century B.C. He identified four elements to completely account for the cause of something:

1. **Material Cause:** The material cause or matter is the basic stuff out of which a thing is made. Matter is characterized by qualities such as gravity, extension, divisibility, size, weight, mass, and volume and can be measured in time and space. The material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and any other building materials used in its construction. These things are necessary to build a house, because it couldn't exist without them.
2. **Formal Cause:** The formal cause is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled; it is the pattern or essence determining the creation of a thing; it is what which makes something what it is; it is that which makes something one thing and not another. Form is more than the shape of something, because things with the same nature can take many different shapes. All human beings have the same essence, but they come in many different shapes. Thus, the blueprints are the formal cause of the house we are describing. They are an essential part of this particular house, because otherwise there would exist nothing more than piles of materials. The materials have the capacity to be used to build many different other types of houses, or even things other than houses.
3. **Efficient Cause:** The efficient cause is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing the matter and form together in the production of a thing, in the case that we have been using, our particular house; it is the agent that imposed this form on that matter; it is the force or agent producing an effect. Efficient cause is what we ordinarily think of as cause; that which has a cause and effect relationship. A cause is that which is responsible for an effect or change in something. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blueprints for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it is without their contribution.
4. **Final Cause:** Lastly, the final cause is the end or purpose for which a thing exists; so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Aristotle believed, and the schoolmen afterwards, that all four elements are necessary in any adequate account of the existence and nature of things, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of something else or nothing. An explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the things themselves. It gives us a complete picture of reality.

To illustrate further, let's use a chair as an example. The material cause of a particular chair is the

wood out of which it is made, the formal cause is the shape into which it was fashioned, the efficient cause was the carpenter by whom the chair was made, and the final cause is the sitting for the sake of which it was designed.

Aristotle and the schoolmen also included a fifth cause, the first cause, usually conceived of as God. We have already given considerable time in this course to first cause arguments that make it reasonable to believe in God's existence.

Causation applied to the Sacraments: The Scholastic theory of causation has been used to explain the Sacraments. Most older Catholics will have heard of the terms matter and form used when applied to the Sacraments. These terms are an application of Aristotelian or Scholastic philosophy to the Sacraments. The material cause or matter of a sacrament is the materials used to perform the sacrament. The formal cause or form is the actualizing principle of the sacrament; it is what makes something happen.

For example, water is the matter or material cause of the Sacrament of Baptism. Theologians have distinguished between, remote and proximate matter. For example, the remote matter of Baptism is water and the proximate matter is the pouring of (or immersion in) water. The proximate matter of the anointing of the sick is the oil of olives blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter is the application of the oil. The remote matter of Confirmation is holy chrism, which is a mixture of olive oil and balm, blessed by the Bishop and the proximate matter consists in the imposition of hands and anointing with chrism. The form of the Sacrament, the actualizing principle, is the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Thus the Trinity is the efficient cause of the effects of the Sacrament. The final cause of the Sacrament of Baptism is the purpose for which the Sacrament is administered. For example, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity washes away Original Sin and infuses Sanctifying Grace at Baptism. The final cause is to make the baptized person a child of God the Father, and a brother or sister of his son Jesus as well as an heir to Heaven.

Penance differs somewhat from the other Sacraments in that while the matter of the other Sacraments is a thing of some kind, water, chrism, etc., the matter of the Sacrament of Penance is the acts of the penitent, such as contrition, confession and satisfaction. The Council of Trent declared that "sins which are destroyed by Penance may properly be called the matter of Penance." The form, the actualizing principle of the sacrament is the words, "I absolve thee from your sins . . . "The efficient cause of the Sacrament is Jesus Christ who speaks through his priest acting in his person (in persona Christi). The final cause of the Sacrament is to restore the penitent once again to God's friendship and to provide the graces necessary to maintaining that friendship. Furthermore, the Council of Trent stated that "since the Sacraments signify what they effect, the words, I absolve thee, signify that remission of sin is effected by the administration of this Sacrament." We could apply this same reasoning to all of the Sacraments.

The modern world rejects Aristotelian-Thomistic causation: During the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, a different perspective began to develop in regard to causation. With the

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development of scientific interest in nature, cause was usually conceived merely as an object, a thing that could be perceived with the senses, often with the aid of a microscope or telescope. Today, causation is generally interpreted as energy or action, whether or not connected with matter, which is a much narrower perspective. This narrower perspective was to have serious implications for every aspect of our lives: social; political; economic; religion; familial; and educational.

Modern science, for the most part, eliminated formal and final causation from the formula of causation and generally has included only material and efficient causes. Material causes or matter can be perceived with the senses and only things that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched are considered real. Final causes are teleological (from the Greek *telos*) which means an ultimate end of something, which science claims we can't know, because it isn't something that can be perceived by the senses. This type of thinking has led to positivism and scientism.

Positivism is a philosophy or ideology that bases all knowledge on perception, and denies the validity of intuition or revelation as valid methods of discovering reality or truth. Positivism maintains that metaphysical questions are unanswerable and that the only knowledge is scientific knowledge. It is often coupled with the conception of progress or improvement as necessary and brought forth by technological development.

Scientism is a belief that scientific knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge and that scientific argument should always be given more weight than knowledge derived by other methods. This view holds that the validity of all fields of inquiry should be evaluated by standard scientific methods of investigation. To illustrate my point; Once when I was describing the miracles at Lourdes and other places to a skeptical cousin of mine, who happens to be a very prominent scientist, and he claimed that science would one day find a natural answer to this phenomena. The attitude that science is the only valid method of searching for the truth and that anything that is not observable for all practical purposes does not exist, and that the only reality is matter, leads to materialism, relativism, and other ideologies that leaves God out all together. I believe that this is the dominant philosophy or ideology that permeates our educational system. Just because something can't be put under a microscope or telescope doesn't mean that it doesn't exist or that it isn't real.

At John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until retirement, we taught the same biology, physics, and chemistry that are taught in the public schools. The difference is we are free to consider all of the elements in the causes of things, and not just that which is perceivable. Here we are free to consider the philosophical and theological aspects of causation as well as the perceivable or empirical, that is, we consider formal and final causation as well as material and efficient causation. But even at John Paul we left most of the philosophy and theology to the religion and humanities courses. A well-educated person needs religious and humanities courses as well as the science and technology courses to get a complete understanding of reality or truth.

Final causation applied to procreation: We have discussed the Aristotelian/Thomistic four

causes at some length in this and other essays: material cause; formal cause; efficient cause; and final cause. The material cause or matter is the “stuff” out of which things are made; the formal cause is the organizing principle that makes a thing what it is and not something else; the efficient cause is the principle that moves something from potency to act; and the final cause is the purpose for which a thing is made. The final cause and purpose of human sexuality is the procreation of the species. The other three elements of causation are oriented to that purpose; therefore, procreation is inherently heterosexual. The word procreation derives from the Latin *procreare*, meaning to beget, to generate children in cooperation with God. God is always the primary creator, but humans participate in with him in the procreation of children in the form of secondary creation. Fr. Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that, “It [procreation] is a formal term for generation and stresses the role of marital intercourse with the intention of producing offspring”. One prominent philosopher asserts that “It is. . .irrelevant that people might indulge in sex for all sorts of reasons other than procreation, for I am not talking about what our purposes are, but what nature's purposes are, again in the Aristotelian sense of final causality.” He goes on to say that, “Now it is true of course that sexual relations are also naturally pleasurable. But giving pleasure is not the final cause or natural end of sex; rather, sexual pleasure has as its own final cause the getting of people to engage in sexual relations, so that they will procreate. In this regard, Edward Feser states in his *The Last Superstition* that sexuality “parallels the situation with eating: Even though eating is pleasurable, the biological point of eating is not to give pleasure, but rather to provide an organism with the nutrients it needs to survive; the pleasure of eating is just nature’s way of getting us to do what is needed to fulfill this end.”

Fr. Jordan Aumann, one of the world's leading theologians of spirituality and spiritual directors, tells us that although the world and the devil are our main enemies, the flesh is our most formidable enemy. By the flesh is meant the disordered operation of our senses due to original sin. Fr. Aumann tells us that the flesh wages war against us in two ways: by its insatiable desire for pleasure, which can threaten our eternal salvation; and by its instinctive fear of suffering, which is an obstacle to sanctification. Because of these detrimental effects, we need to know how to combat these dangerous tendencies.

Since God gave us a desire for pleasure, there is, of course, nothing wrong with it. Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy, to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin.

Fr. Aumann points out that a problem occurs when we attempt to discriminate the difference between honest pleasure from disordered and forbidden pleasure, and how to keep ourselves within the boundaries of the former. The enjoyment of lawful pleasures often becomes occasions or stimulation to disordered and unlawful pleasures. To help us make the morally correct distinc-

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tion and practice between lawful and unlawful pleasures, the Church has always advocated that we practice mortification by depriving ourselves of many lawful pleasures. This is one of the main reasons we fast and abstain.

He also tells us that our appetites associated with nutrition and generation create the largest problems for us. The former is needed to maintain the survival of the individual and the latter the survival of the human species. Satisfying the appetite for food and drink and the need to procreate the human species is our principal struggle. The problem occurs when we try to satisfy these appetites without regard for the maintenance of the individual and the species. If reason does not intervene to keep these instinctive appetites within morally acceptable limits, they can easily lead to the destruction of the individual and the species; they can lead to gluttony and lust. He says that, “It is incredible how much harm an unmortified appetite can cause in us, not only as regards perfection, which is absolutely impossible without mortification, but even as regards our eternal salvation. Sensual people not only are not united with God, but they also lose the taste for divine things, as St. Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 2:14)” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Feser, states that nature makes it very difficult to indulge in sex without procreation. He says that it takes some effort to come up with and use mechanical contraceptive devices, and even then, they were not very effective during most of human history. Moreover, he says that “human experience indicates that people simply find sexual relations more pleasurable when such devices are not used, even if they will often use them anyway out of a desire to avoid pregnancy”, and “this is one reason pregnancy—even when cut short by abortion—is so very common even in societies in which contraception is easily available: People know they could take a few minutes to go buy a condom, but go ahead and indulge in unprotected sex anyway”. Even with the advent of “the pill”, pregnancies (though also abortions) are as common as rain; and even effective use of the pill—which has existed only for a very brief period of human history—requires that a woman remember to take it at the appointed times and be willing to put up with its uncomfortable side effects”. He concludes from this that “the final cause of sex is procreation, and the final cause of sexual pleasure is to get us to indulge in it” In other words, sexual pleasure is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Moral theologians consider the pleasure of sexual relations between a man and a woman to be part of the unitive function of sexuality.

In addition to the primary function of human sexuality to be procreative, it has the additional secondary function of being a unitive function for the husband and wife. The *Catechism* of the Catholic Church says of this matter: “The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude” (*Catechism* No. 2362). Pope Pius XII wrote in a 1951 document, “Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure: The Creator himself . . . established that in the [generative] function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment. They accept what the Creator has intended for them. At the same time, spouses should know how to keep themselves within the limits of just moderation” (Discourse). Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “The spouses’ union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the

good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family” (No. 2363). “The conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity”. It concludes this topic by saying, “By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its orientation toward man's exalted vocation to parenthood” (No. 2369).

Feser points out that nature has planned that humans are designed to have many children, which seems “to put a fairly heavy burden on women, who, if 'nature takes its course,' are bound to become pregnant some-what frequently. She has also put a fairly heavy burden on children too, given that unlike non-human offspring they are utterly dependent on others for their needs, and for a very long period. This is true not only of their biological needs, but of the moral and cultural needs they have by virtue of being little rational animals. They need education in both what is useful and right, and correction of error.” He concludes that, “nature's taking its course thus seems to leave mothers and offspring pretty helpless, or at any rate it would do so if there weren't someone ordained by nature to provide for them. But of course there is such a person, namely the father of the children. Fathers obviously have a strong incentive to look after their own children rather than someone else's, and they are also, generally speaking and notoriously, jealous of the affections of the women they have children with, sometimes to the point of being willing to kill the competition. Thus Mother Nature very equitably puts a heavy burden on fathers too, pushing them into a situation where they must devote their daily labors to providing for their children and the woman or women with whom they have had these children; and when 'nature takes its course' these children are bound to be somewhat numerous, so that the father's commitment is necessarily going to have to be long-term.” All of this is the reason that marriage and the family must be a permanent and stable relationship. In fact, the family, not the individual, is the cell, the least divisible unit of a society, and will be no healthier than each individual cell. Our society is disintegrating, because the family is disintegrating.

Stating the obvious fact that sex is pleasurable, Feser claims that this is “only because this is nature's way of pushing us into doing what is necessary for procreation; husbands and wives often feel great affection for one another, but this tendency is put in them by nature only because it facilitates the stability of the union that the successful generation and upbringing of children requires”. This is all associated with nature's purposes regarding final causes. In this regard he states, “If human beings didn't reproduce sexually, sexual organs wouldn't exist at all, and neither would sexual pleasure, neither would romantic love, but this affection wouldn't have any of the distinctive features we associate with the feelings that exist between lovers, or between husbands and wives or parents and children. All of these pleasures and affections exist in nature only because sexual reproduction does, and thus their point is to facilitate procreation, again in the full sense of not only generating, but also rearing, children. That is the big picture view of the teleology or final causality of sex. Every link in the chain has procreation as its final cause, whatever the intentions of the actors”. If all this is true, and I believe that it is, Feser asserts that “it cannot possibly be good for us to use them in any other way, whether an individual person thinks it is or

not, any more than it can possibly be good for an alcoholic to indulge his taste for excessive drink....” Although married couples might not always intend to have children with every sexual act, every act must be open to the procreative final cause or purpose of the act. They cannot morally do anything contraceptive to interfere with the natural processes. It is essential that a couple be married to engage in procreative acts, because properly rearing the children of such liaisons requires long term stability.

The Church’s attitude toward contraception

Fr. Peter Armenio says of contraception in his History of the Church that, “The Church Fathers taught that procreation within Matrimony is good and blessed, and that it is one of the intrinsic purposes of sexual intercourse. Artificial prevention of this possibility denigrates both the act and the subjects of the act. Even ancient Greek philosophy saw contraception as an unnatural violation since it destroys the possibility of one of the natural ends of sexual relations.” The *Catechism* says of the matter, “Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is ‘on the side of life’, teaches that ‘it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered per se to the procreation of human life.’ This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act” (No. 2366). Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility” (No. 2367). In other words, parents are co-creators with God

The connection between the contraceptive mentality and abortion

Fr. Frank Pavone, who is National Director, Priests for Life, claims that “The links between abortion and contraception are more and more widely recognized, and not only in Catholic circle.” He says that “They are linked by a common mentality, which is that I may stifle the power of sex to produce a new life.” He then quotes Pope John Paul II as writing in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, “It is frequently asserted that contraception, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. The Catholic Church is then accused of actually promoting abortion, because she obstinately continues to teach the moral unlawfulness of contraception. When looked at carefully, this objection is clearly un-founded. It may be that many people use contraception with a view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the ‘contraceptive mentality’—which is very different from responsible parenthood, lived in respect for the full truth of the conjugal act—are such that they in fact strengthen

this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected" (No. 13).

He continues to quote the pope as saying, "Certainly, from the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment 'You shall not kill'. But despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree". Commenting on this statement, Fr. Pavone states, "Contraception, in other words, is more like the sister to abortion rather than the parent. What gives rise to them both?" He answers by once again quoting the pope as saying, "Such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment".

Fr. Pavone states the fact that every culture and subculture which has opened the doors to contraception has likewise experienced an increased practice of abortion. He writes that, "The Alan Guttmacher Institute indicates the following as the main reasons women offer for their abortions. Ask yourself what resemblance they bear to the reasons for birth control. "On average, women give at least 3 reasons for choosing abortion: 3/4 say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or other responsibilities; about 2/3 say they cannot afford a child; and 1/2 say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner" (from the Guttmacher website www.agi-usa.org). Moreover, Fr. Pavone points out that some contraceptives are abortifacients "capable of causing early and usually unknown abortions. The morally relevant point here is that 'it is objectively a grave sin to dare to risk murder'" (Declaration on Procured Abortion, 1974, n.12-13). Father says that "If your action might kill a person, and you do it, you declare your willingness to kill a person."

Without doubt, abortion and contraception are connected. As Pavone asserts, "They are linked with each other because they are linked with many other evils: the disconnection of freedom from truth, a relativistic view of morality, a positivistic view of law, a culture of hedonism, and many other problems. What lies at the solution to these problems is to rediscover the dominion of God. Janet Smith, Professor of Philosophy at Ave Maria University, says of the connection between contraception and abortion, "The connection between contraception and abortion is primarily this: contraception facilitates the kind of relationships and even the kind of attitudes and moral characters that are likely to lead to abortion. The contraceptive mentality treats sexual intercourse as though it had little natural connection with babies; it thinks of babies as an 'accident' of pregnancy, as an unwelcome intrusion into a sexual relationship, as a burden. The sexual revolution has no fondness—no room for—the connection between sexual intercourse and babies. The sexual revolution simply was not possible until fairly reliable contraceptives were available. Far from being a check to the sexual revolution, contraception is the fuel that facilitated the beginning of the sexual revolution and enables it to continue to rage."

In his prophetic encyclical against contraception (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968), Pope Paul VI predicted that contraceptive use would encourage men to lose respect for women, and would come to consider her “as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.” It would lead to men ignoring issues of women's physical and emotional health even more than in the past and exploit them as instruments of selfish pleasure. In addition to a lose of respect for women, Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia has noted that the pope warned of other cultural problems that would worsen, if Church teachings regarding married life and contraception were ignored, including a rise in “conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality.” In addition, contraception would be abused by “public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies.” He points out how today, first-world leaders regularly export “contraceptives, abortion and sterilization” to developing nations, often as a prerequisite for financial aid. Moreover, human beings would be tempted to believe that they have “unlimited dominion” over their bodies. The archbishop concludes that “Pope Paul VI was indeed a prophet”. Another source has said that, “Because the world and many in the Church have rejected Pope Paul's words, we are witnessing what one writer has called a worldwide 'sexual holocaust'”.

From the point of view of natural law, Feser states that it should be obvious that abortion is automatically ruled out, because “it constitutes a particularly violent interference with nature’s purposes.” He continues to say, “But there are other reasons too why abortion is immoral, and indeed especially wicked. The growth of a new human being in his or her mother's womb is not simply one natural process among others; it is the beginning of that relationship among human beings that is perhaps the closest of all, that between mother and child. A mother's natural instinct is to protect her child at all costs, especially when it is at its most vulnerable; the womb ought therefore to be the safest place in the world.” But this instinct resides not only in the mother, but also in the father as well. To consent to the killing of their unborn child goes against this instinct in the most egregious way possible. It is a biological fact that the child is a human being and person from the very instant of conception Even a single celled fertilized ovum or zygote is fully a person requiring only time and nutrition to develop into a fully functional human being. Therefore, every human being has a natural right to life, which can be lost only by committing a serious crime, which no unborn child is capable of doing.

All human beings have a natural right to life

Scholastic philosophers developed the idea that all human beings have a natural right to their lives. Feser explains this theory of natural rights this way: “Nature has set for us certain ends, and the natural law enjoins us the pursuit of those ends. We also live in society with others—man being a social animal as well as a rational one, as Aristotle noted—and these others also have ends set for them by nature. But we can all pursue these ends only if our fellow human beings do not interfere with that pursuit. Hence, the existence of the natural law entails that we have certain rights against interference with that pursuit; and since there is no greater interference than being killed, it follows that every being has, at least until he forfeits it by committing a serious crime, a right not to be killed. This also entails many other rights such as a person's liberty that is strong

enough to rule out chattel slavery as intrinsically immoral—the claim made by some that natural law theory would support slavery as it was known in the United States is a slander.” Tying the natural right to life and abortion to reproduction, he asserts, “But suffice it to note for our purposes here that is triply condemned by the natural law: again, it involves a deliberate turning of the reproductive process away from its natural end; it manifests an extraordinary degree of personal moral corruption insofar as it follows from a will to override the protective maternal and/or paternal instincts nature has put into us; and it violates the right to life that every human being has by nature.”

Objections to natural law theory

There have been many objections to natural law theory. One common objection is that natural law would forbid sterile people to marry. But as Feser states, this isn't necessarily true. For example, if someone is sterile through no fault of his or her own, he or she has not done anything to interfere with nature's purposes. However, even sterile married couples cannot, according to natural law theory, allow their own sexual encounters to culminate in anything other than normal sexual intercourse. He says that “pro-creation would not result anyway is irrelevant: The point is not to do something oneself that interferes with natural processes . . . which is primarily procreative but secondarily (as ancillary to its procreative purpose) to unite husband and wife in mutual affection, not to provide a kind of built-in entertainment apparatus.” He concludes this discussion by saying, “Finally, if someone married a sterile person precisely as a means of avoiding procreation, natural law theory would condemn this as immoral.”

Some opponents of natural law theory claim that for proponents of natural law theory to be consistent they would have to condemn using a natural capacity or organ other than for its natural function, because this would frustrate its natural end. Feser gives some examples to illustrate this point. For example, “holding a table up with one's leg, or holding nails with one's teeth, does not frustrate the walking and chewing functions of legs and teeth, especially since nature obviously does not intend for us to be walking and eating at every single moment. But having one's leg amputated to make some sort of bizarre political statement, or throwing up one's food so as not to gain weight would frustrate nature's purposes and thus be condemned by natural law theory as immoral.” However, “Amputating a leg or removing other organs to save a person's life, though, would not be ruled out by natural law theory, since these organs and their functions are metaphysically subordinate to the overall purpose of sustaining the life and activities of the organism as a whole, and can thus be sacrificed if this is the only way to prevent the loss of that life.” Feser concludes this portion of his discussion by stating, “Natural law theory does not entail that every frustration of nature's purposes is a serious moral failing. Where certain natural functions concern only some minor aspect of human life, a frustration of nature's purposes might be at worst a minor lapse in a virtue like prudence. But where they concern the maintenance of the species itself, and the material and spiritual well-being of children, women, and men—as they do where sex is concerned—acting contrary to them cannot fail to be of serious moral significance.”

Homosexuality and the natural law

Then Feser goes on to the topic of homosexuality. He asked, “Does natural law theory entail that homosexuals can't marry?” He answers that they can marry; they can marry someone of the opposite sex. What they can't do is marry each other, because the metaphysics of natural law theory determines that the final cause or purpose of marriage is procreative, and persons of the same sex can't procreate. He responds by asserting:

There is no such thing as same-sex marriage anymore than there are round squares. Indeed, there is really no such thing as 'sex' outside the context of sexual intercourse between a man and woman. Sodomy (whether homosexual or heterosexual) no more counts as 'sex' than puking up a Quarter Pounder counts as eating.” He finishes his treatment of homosexuality by writing, “No legislature or opinion poll could possibly change these facts, any more than they could repeal the law of gravity or the Pythagorean theorem. And any 'law' that attempted such an impossibility would be absolutely null and utterly void, a joke at best and a straightforward assault on the very foundations of morality at worst. For if 'same-sex marriage' is not contrary to nature, than nothing is; and if nothing is contrary to nature, then there can be no grounds whatsoever for moral judgment.

Feser claims that “[I]t is a characteristic common to all the perversions that in them reproduction as an aim is put aside. This is actually the criterion by which we judge whether a sexual activity is perverse—if it departs from reproduction in its aims and pursues the attainment of gratification independently.” He goes on to inform us that every Christian denomination officially taught that contraception was a sin until the Anglicans approved of its use at its Lambeth Conference in 1930. He says that “even the secular *Washington Post* fretted at the time that this would lead to the collapse of traditional sexual morality. For once the *Post* was right: It did lead to just the consequences they predicted, even if these consequences have now come to be labeled ‘progress.’”

It was no more than forty or so years ago that contraception, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and homosexuality were considered sinful, whereas today they have become the politically correct solution to all of our problems. The world has been turned upside down, such as was the world of George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is “a dystopian and satirical novel set in Oceania, where society is tyrannized by The Party and its totalitarian ideology.” In the novel by “doublespeak” people are forced to believe that evil becomes good. As one source states of the matter:

Like so many Newspeak words, the word “blackwhite” has two mutually contradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts. Applied to a Party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline demands this. But it means also the ability to believe that black is white, and more, to know that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary. This demands a continuous alteration of the past, made possible by the system of thought which really embraces all the rest, and which is

known in Newspeak as doublethink. Doublethink is basically the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.

Feser states that what people believed all along about the immorality of these behaviors was right, and that “the current state of secular opinion on these matters is evidence not of progress but of steep decline and extreme decadence.” He continues to apply his application of the natural law to abortion, contraception, and homosexuality by also applying it to polygamy and divorce, stating “while historically permitted within some otherwise conservative religious contexts, are suboptimal at best and in practice usually positively immoral.”

Reason why contemporary philosophers won't accept Aristotelian metaphysics

Feser tells the story of a prominent philosopher who once assured him that if Aristotle's metaphysics really does have conservative moral implications—that is, to admit that formal and final causes have anything to do with the cause of things—would be reason enough for contemporary philosophers and other intellectuals to refuse reconsidering their rejection of Aristotelian metaphysics. He claims that is the way many secular academics think today, that “[t]heir egalitarian liberalism is the axis around which everything else turns, and all of metaphysics, epistemology, and even science itself, when it seems to touch on moral or religious questions, must be judged by reference to how well they conform to this standard.” He is, of course, here referring to political correctness. He continues, “Yet their own ‘research’ into moral questions is not a disinterested pursuit of truth, but an exercise in liberal apologetics, with the main conclusions determined in advance. As in so many other ways, they have become exactly what they claim to despise.”

Feser makes an important point when he reminds us that using natural law theory to prove that certain human behaviors are harmful, especially sexual morality, does not require appealing “to scripture, or traditional religious teaching, or even to a purely philosophical notion of God.” As this indicates:

[T]he tedious secularist allegation that opposition to abortion, ‘same-sex marriage,’ and the like can only rest on ‘faith,’ or an appeal to Divine revelation, is pure fiction. Traditional morality does not rest on arbitrary divine commands backed by the threat of punishment, but rather on the systematic analysis of human nature entailed by classical philosophy. Plato’s and Aristotle’s condemnation of homosexuality was not based on the Bible, after all, but on their respective rationally grounded systems of metaphysics and ethics. [But this doesn’t mean that God is irrelevant to natural law theory], “for while what has been said so far has required no reference to Him, it remains true that, as we saw in our discussion of the soul, man's overarching end is to know God, and he has an immortal soul that gives him a destiny beyond this earthly life. Furthermore, since God is the First Cause of the world and the one who ultimately orders things to their ends, He is the Author of the natural law, even if knowledge of the grounds and content of that law can largely be had without reference to Him. Obedience to the natural law is thus obedience to God.

THE NATURAL LAW AND CHRISTIAN PERSONALISM

The philosophy of Personalism came to be used widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican Council II, which ended in December 1965. These theologians didn't reject the natural law theology; they simply added another dimension to it in the explanation and understanding of human behavior. Fr Thomas McGovern, a priest of the Prelature of *Opus Dei* in Dublin, wrote in an article entitled "The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview":

The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth century.

Fr. John Hardon defines materialism in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as "The theory that all reality is only matter, or a function of matter, or ultimately derived from matter." McGovern identifies three types of materialism that has affected the earth for the past few centuries: the materialism that derives from the worship of science; Marxist materialism; and the materialism that results from technological advances. In regard to the first, he states that, "The experimental method tended to the view that, since only what can be measured is real, only material reality exists. At the human level, advances in biology, influenced by the theory of evolution, had led to a depreciation of the spiritual dimension of man." In regard to Marxism, he says, "the influences of the Marxist philosophy of materialism, in a tyranny without precedent in human history, brought misery and death to countless millions." And regarding the third type of materialism, he says that, "the rapid development of technology, creating a wealthy society driven by consumerism. This society measures progress solely in terms of material wealth, and effectively reduces the practice of politics to the maintenance of favorable economic conditions." He concludes from this listing of materialism that "The driving principles of this rapidly expanding practical materialism are the primacy given to individual subjective rights, and the dominance of a liberal capitalistic outlook indifferent to social responsibilities at a global level."

Then McGovern proceeds to identify several of the leading Personalist philosophers and theologians who had a direct influence on Pope John Paul's thinking. He tells us that "These personalist philosophies did not constitute a complete system, but rather expanded the framework of traditional Christian philosophy with a more profound exploration of the reaches of the human spirit." He closes this part of his article by saying, "These insights of personalist philosophy are based on the light of Revelation—on the doctrine of man made to the image and likeness of God and on the Trinitarian theology of relationships. These were some of the insights and strands of thinking which, added to traditional philosophy, gave impetus to the articulation of a Christian anthropology in Vatican II and subsequently in the magisterium of John Paul II."

McGovern points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.” He writes that “Chapter I is a very evocative reflection on the dignity of the human person in the light of his creation in the image and likeness of God. It is also a rich discourse on the vocation of man, the significance of human freedom and the nature of conscience. The christological conclusion at the end of this chapter (no.22), which has been repeated so often in the magisterium of John Paul II, is perhaps the best known passage of the whole document:” Then he quotes John Paul as saying, “In reality, it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear . . . Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling . . . Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.”

He quotes John Paul as saying in the second chapter about one of the most important truths about ourselves that “If man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself. This capacity for a relationship with God and with others is a reflection of the inner relational life of God himself which is the Trinitarian communion of the divine Persons. It is of particular importance for understanding the personal vocation to holiness of every man and the evangelizing mission of the Church.” During and after Vatican II, Church documents speak of human beings as persons rather than souls, which are only part of the human being.

To give one small example, I think that this is reflected in the change of the wording just before the recipient received Holy Communion after Vatican II. According to the 1962 *Ordo Missae* of the Mass, otherwise called the Tridentine Mass, before the council, the person about to receive the Host said “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.” However, after the council, the 1970 Missal, otherwise known as the *Novus Ordo*, or New Order in English, promulgated by Pope Paul VI following Vatican II, the wording was changed to, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed.” Now this a very subtle change in wording, but, I think, that it symbolic of the fact that human beings are not simply souls, but possess both bodies and a souls that God intended to be joined together for all eternity. Scholastic theology and philosophy had focused primarily on the human soul with its faculties of intellect and free will, whereas Personalists focus on the whole person—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, as well as the soul and its faculties. Interestingly, the original words of the liturgy have been restored, because they more closely follow the official Latin text of the lectionary.

The meaning of Personalism

Personalism is a variety of phenomenology, which has been defined as “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.” It literally means the study of

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“phenomena”, which are “the appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.”

Thomas D. Williams writes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* that Personalism has a “plurality of schools” and that it “exists in many different versions, and this makes it somewhat difficult to define as a philosophical and theological movement. He says:

Many philosophical schools have at their core one particular thinker or even one central work which serves as a canonical touchstone. Personalism is a more diffused and eclectic movement and has no such universal reference point. It is, in point of fact, more proper to speak of many personalisms than one personalism. In 1947 Jacques Maritain [a prominent Catholic philosopher] could write that there are at least a dozen personalist doctrines, which at times have nothing more in common than the word ‘person.’ Moreover, because of their emphasis on the subjectivity of the person and their ties to phenomenology and existentialism, some dominant forms of personalism have not lent themselves to systematic treatises.

He goes on to say:

It is perhaps more proper to speak of personalism as a ‘current’ or a broader ‘worldview’, since it represents more than one school or one doctrine while at the same time the most important forms of personalism do display some central and essential commonalities. Most important of the latter is the general affirmation of the centrality of the person for philosophical thought. Personalism posits ultimate reality and value in personhood—human as well as (at least for most personalists) divine. It emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person's essentially relational or communitarian dimension. The title ‘personalism’ can therefore legitimately be applied to any school of thought that focuses on the reality of persons and their unique status among beings in general, and personalists normally acknowledge the indirect contributions of a wide range of thinkers throughout the history of philosophy who did not regard themselves as personalists. Personalists believe that the human person should be the ontological and epistemological starting point of philosophical reflection. They are concerned to investigate the experience, the status, and the dignity of the human being as person, and regard this as the starting-point for all subsequent philosophical analysis.

Philosophers as diverse as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Scheler, Stein, Marcel, Mounier, Gilson, De Lubac, Maritain, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and many others have been classified as personalists.

Eight points of Personalism

One personalist philosopher has identified eight points that distinguish Personalism from other

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philosophies.

1. The human person is a subject, not an object like the things of the world: Since the person is called to self-determination, he or she is a moral subject, deciding on all his or her doings in conscience and consequently in a responsible way.
2. The human person is a subject in corporeality: Our body forms part of the totality that we are: what concerns our human body affects our entire person.
3. Because of the materiality of our body, our being is a being-in-the-world.
4. Human persons are essentially directed toward each other.
5. Not only because of our openness to one another are we social beings, but also because we need to live in social groups with appropriate structures and institutions.
6. Human persons are fundamentally open to God, and it is the task of moral theology to explain how, according to our Christian revelation, our relationship to God affects us in all the dimensions of our person.
7. Human persons are historical beings since they are characterized by historicity.
8. All human persons are fundamentally equal, but at the same time each is an originality, a unique subject.

None of these points are new to Catholic moral philosophy, but they do add an emphasis on human experience not found in the traditional natural law perspective.

The meaning of Christian Personalism

Christian Personalism includes all of the above eight points. Personalism has been defined as “Any of various theories of subjective idealism regarding personality as the key to the interpretation of reality.” Joseph Amato defines Personalism in his *Mounier & Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World*, as:

a diverse intellectual movement of the twentieth century. In part, it belongs to no one school; and in part it belongs to everyone who believes man is a personal and communal being who is mortally endangered by his own political, social, economic, and ideological creations. Anyone, in fact, who in the name of man’s worth seeks simultaneously to save man from isolation and tyranny, from the furies of individualism and collectivism, can consider himself, if he wishes, a Personalist. Personalism, defined in this loose sense, includes a whole array of men and movements who, without official program, are committed to man's transcendence and are the enemies of all individuals, ideas, societies, and states that deny man the needs of his body, the dignity of his spirit, the presence and sustenance of a true human community.

Origin of the Word Person

Since the word “person” is so important to the Personalist philosophy, how have theologians and

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philosophers defined the human person? The correct definition of person is extremely important, because only persons have rights. One of the reasons there has been such a loss of respect for the lives of human beings in our society is a flawed conception of the human person, for only persons have rights. The concept “person” has not always existed. The ancient pagan world had no concept of the person; they simply saw humans as part of a larger entity, such as the family or tribe. Pagans had no conception of the value or uniqueness of each individual, something I think is also true of modern pagans as well. The concept of person is unique to Christianity. The Church found it necessary to develop the concept of person to define the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation in the face of heretical attacks on these dogmas. The early Christians, such as the great second century theologian and philosopher Tertullian, first developed the term “person” to define the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines.

Severinus Boethius, who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the first that we know of to define the concept “person.” He defined person as “an individual, rational substance.” To better understand his meaning of person let’s look at each of the key words in this definition.

- **Individual:** By individual is meant that a person is separate from all other persons and is unique and irreplaceable.
- **Rational:** By rational is meant that a person has the ability to think or in the case of humans, at least have the potential of rational thought. Of course, God is omniscient, that is, his intellect has no limits; he knows everything. Since humans can think, this definition applies to them as well, even the most severely retarded.
- **Substance:** By saying that a person is a substance, we mean a person exists in himself. Personhood is not an accidental quality like hair color or skin color, but that which distinguishes God from all human beings, human beings from other types of beings, and one human being from another; substance is the very essence of personhood; it is that which makes a person what he is and not something else. Sometimes nature is used in place of essence, although there is a slight difference in their meaning. The three persons of the Trinity are composed of the same uncreated substance. On the other hand, human beings are composed of a substance created by God, which includes both the body and the soul. The soul forms and gives life to the body; body and soul together compose a human substance.

Boethius’ definition of personhood is a good one as far as it goes, but the problem with it is it doesn’t consider the relational aspect of personhood. In summary, persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable, and is related to other beings. This definition applies to both the Persons of God and human persons.

God is a Personal God

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all

other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. One way of conceptualizing God the Trinity is to think of God the Father as Thinker—the First Person, God the Son as Thought—the Second Person, and God the Holy Spirit as love—the Third Person. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Son is the image and word of the Father. The Father communicates his entire being to his son, thus they are equal and coeternal; they share the same being or substance. The Father and Son then communicate their entire being to the Holy Spirit as an act of love. The three Persons of the Trinity share the same consciousness, omniscient intellect and omnipotent will. God possesses an “absolutely and infinitely eternal perfect spirit” that is always and everywhere present (omnipresence). The three Persons also share the same likeness: holiness, wholeness; righteousness, etc.

The Father is the originator of the Trinitarian Family. Since he is the source and origin of the entire divinity, he is called the First Person of the Trinity. The Son is generated by the Father; therefore is called the Second Person of the Trinity. He is the Word and Image of the Father. Since he is eternally generated or begotten (not created or made), he is of the same substance or being as the Father; therefore, he is coequal and coeternal with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, which proceeds from the Father and the Son. The First and Second Persons combine in an act of perfect love for one another that constitutes a Third Person, the Holy Spirit.

How about God’s Nature, his likeness to human persons before the fall? God is holy, which means he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature. Moreover, he is infinitely just, which means that he always gives everyone his or her rightful due, what he or she has earned, whether it be in the form of rewards or punishments.

The Incarnation

At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human nature possessing a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. His human nature subsists or has existence in a divine person. In his divinity, he remains one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, continuing to share his divine intellect, will, and consciousness with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The divine intellect is omniscient or all-knowing and the divine will is omnipotent or all-powerful. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. It is extremely important to emphasize that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine intellect, will, and consciousness with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy

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Trinity had separate intellects, wills, and consciousness, there would exist three separate gods, not one.

During the Incarnation, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity becomes Jesus Christ. In addition to his divine Person, who possesses the divine spirit with infinite intellect and will, in his humanity Jesus possesses a human soul with human intellect and will. His human nature consists of a body and soul with the faculties of intellect and will, which is “complete and perfect in every respect.” Instead of subsisting in a human person as do all other human natures, however, his human nature subsisted in a divine Person, the Son, who is the Second Person of the Trinity. At the same time “the Son's divine nature was in no way changed or diminished.” In Jesus Christ, a human nature exists that did not exist before and it subsists in a divine Person. However, there is no change in the divine Person. Thus Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man, one Divine Person with two natures, human and divine. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. In his humanity, He is like us in all things but sin. Although he is perfectly holy and virtuous, in order to fully share in our humanity he allowed himself to suffer from many of the consequences of Original Sin: exhaustion, hunger, thirst, suffering, sorrow, and even death

Humans as the image of God

The “image of God” is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. Humans possess an immortal spirit or soul united to a mortal body. The persons of Adam and Eve possessed the preternatural gifts of bodily immortality, infused knowledge, and integrity (absence of concupiscence) before their fall from God's grace; afterwards they lost these gifts. In regard to their souls, in God's image they possessed finite or limited intellects and wills. Of course, God's intellect is omniscient or all-knowing and his will is omnipotent or all-powerful. Although after the Fall, humans remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), they had to suffer the consequences of sin, which is suffering, sorrow, and death.

Humans as the likeness of God

In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was the life of God within them, the indwelling Trinity. By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. They were an adopted son and daughter of God the Father and a brother and sister to his Son and heirs to Heaven. The Original Justice possessed by Adam and Eve means

that until their fall from God's grace, they always gave him his due by adoring, praising and worshipping him and doing his will.

Consequences of the Fall

However, after the fall, they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice) as well. Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness. Yet God still loved them, so much so that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem them and their posterity and to restore them to his family.

In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after our first parents committed the Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the father's plan to send his son into the world some day to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children

These Trinitarian and Christological doctrines could not have been defined without an understanding of the concept person. Once these dogmas were defined with respect to the Holy Trinity, the concept of person could then be applied to man, who is created in the image and likeness of God, who is a personal God. We looked at a few definitions in the preceding paragraphs of the human person that have been posited over the centuries, the best of them emphasizing both the rationality and relationality of human beings. An important point to remember regarding the definition of person in the words of one scholar is that:

[W]hen the Church defined the dogma of the Trinity, the three Persons in one God—the pattern of all personhood—it did so in terms of relationships. The three Divine Persons are distinguished from one another by their relationships. Each fully possesses the Divine Nature and all the Divine Attributes. Also human beings are also distinguished by relationships, specifically their relationship to God and to other human persons. To quote one scholar in this regard, “God called each human person into existence; therefore each person is known and loved by God and is of infinite value. Each human person has a unique

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place in the Divine plan. He is called to know, love, and serve God in this life and to be happy with him forever in the next. All of his rights and duties stem from this relationship.”

All persons are related to the Persons of the Holy Trinity and to each other

We are all persons related to the Persons of the Holy Trinity and to each other. It is our rationality and relationality that make us like God. It is rationality and relationality that renders a human being a person. The three persons of the Holy Trinity share the same divine rationality or reason (intellect) and will and each is connected to the other by relationality: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a family relationship. God created us as rational beings and when the son became one of us, he elevated our nature to the supernatural level by adoption and by grace. By adoption, we become connected to the Holy Trinity in a family relationship. As members of God's human family, we are related to all human beings. We are rational creatures who at our baptism became sons and daughters of the Father by adoption and by grace, brothers and sisters to his son Jesus Christ, and heirs to Heaven if we remain faithful to him to the end of our earthly lives. God loves us so much that he gave his only begotten son that those who believe in him and obey his commandments will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). All of the Church's moral and social teachings flow from these facts. The starting point of Christian Personalism is that humans are created in the “image and likeness of God,” and redeemed by Christ.

Catholic Personalism

There are at least two major stains of Christian personalism: the so-called Boston School of Personalism, which has Methodist roots; and the Catholic brand of Personalism. The Methodists brand of personalism has been largely confined to the United States, and is associated with theologians Borden Parker Bowne and Edgar Sheffield Brightman of Boston University, Thomas O. Buford of Furman University, and Ralph Tyler Flewelling of the University of Southern California. Martin Luther King, Jr. was greatly influenced by personalism in his studies at Boston University.

There were three varieties of Catholic Personalism:

1. **France:** Emmanuel Mounier who in turn influenced Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain.
2. **Germany:** Edmund Husserl whose brand of phenomenology influenced Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Edith Stein, all three Catholic converts. He had a lot of influence on Karol Wojtyla's philosophy (John Paul II) as well.
3. **Poland:** Roman Ingarden who influenced Karol Wojtyla among others. This brand was known as Lublin Personalism after the university where it was centered.

The leader of the movement in France, the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, identified several contemporary thinkers as creators of this tradition, including Rudolf Hermann Lotze, a

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nineteenth century German philosopher and logician; Max Scheler who was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology; Martin Buber who was an Austrian-born Jewish philosopher best known for his existentialist I-Thou philosophy; Emmanuel Levinas, a French Jewish philosopher and Talmudic commentator, the Talmud being a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history; Karl Theodor Jaspers, a renowned German psychiatrist and philosopher who had a strong influence on modern theology, psychiatry and philosophy; Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, a Russian religious and political philosopher; Henri-Louis Bergson, a major French-Jewish philosopher, who was influential in the first half of the twentieth century; the French philosopher Maurice Blondel; Charles Péguy, a noted French poet, essayist, and editor; and Jacques Maritain, who was a famous French Catholic Thomist philosopher. As should be evident from this list, not all of the pioneering Personalists were Catholics, but those who weren't had an influence on subsequent Catholic thinkers.

Because they emphasized the role that human experience plays in history, religion, and other aspects of our lives, I would add to this list Dietrich von Hildebrand, a German Catholic philosopher and theologian who Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church; Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day who were co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States; Edmund Husserl, who was a German-Jewish philosopher and Christian convert considered to be the founder of phenomenology, which is the study of experience and intellectual processes of which we are introspectively aware; St. Edith Stein, who was a German-Jewish philosopher, convert to Catholicism, a nun who took the name of Teresia Benedicta of the Cross, and martyr at Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died in the gas chamber; Gabriel Honoré Marcel, a French Christian existentialist philosopher and playwright; Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II; and, Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Of course, many other noted personalists could be added to this list.

The Nouvelle Theologie (New Theology) and Personalism

I would also add the theologians and philosophers of the *Nouvelle Theologie* (New Theology), such as the Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou of the Lyons province and by the Dominicans Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu of Le Saulchoir. One of the founders of the New Theology was Chenu. He and Louis Charlier had been censored and their works placed on the Index in the 1930's by Cardinal Pietro Parente of the Holy Office, now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I understand that Parente was the first writer to use the term New Theology to describe the writings of Chenu and Charlier in a paper in 1942, and was a major influence on Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* that condemned these and other theologians eight years later. Parente charged these theologians, among other things, with "having followed Mohler and, more radically, the Modernists, in belittling the value of reason and privileging religious feeling." By Mohler is meant Johann Adam Möhler, who was a German Roman Catholic theologian of the early nineteenth century. His ideas were rejected by the Catholics of his day as being inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church.

Ressourcement: These theologians were involved with *Ressourcement*, which means returning to the traditional sources of Catholic theology—the Scriptures, Tradition, and the Church Fathers. They also placed a lot of importance in the role of history in the development of Catholic doctrine as well as advocating the use of modern philosophy to better understand the Church’s teachings when compatible with them. This movement drew some of its inspiration from earlier nineteenth century theologians and philosophers such as Johann Adam Möhler and John Henry Newman and others, including the French Catholic poets Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel. Academic theologians involved in this movement included such Belgian and German thinkers as Emile Mersch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, and Dom Anselm Stolz. Even though German theologians contributed to the movement, its undisputed center was France. Others who were considered part of the movement were priests Hans Urs von Balthasar and Louis Bouyer. Also, the Frenchman layman Etienne Gilson was considered a devotee of the New Theology. Although the various theologians associated with the New Theology held different views on specific issues, they all believed that theology had to speak to the Church's present situation and that the key to theology's relevance to the present lay in the creative recovery of its past. In other words, as one scholar has said, “they all saw clearly that the first step to what later came to be known as *aggiornamento* had to be *ressourcementó*, a rediscovery of the riches of the Church's two-thousand-year treasury, a return to the very headwaters of the Christian tradition.” To accomplish their objectives, they employed an historical methodology and utilized modern philosophies that they believed are compatible with Catholic teaching.

These theologians shared a common view of how the Catholic Church should approach theology. They reacted against the dominance of Neo-scholasticism and the scholastically-influenced manuals of the day. Neo-Scholasticism is the revival and development of medieval scholastic philosophy starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. It has some times been called neo-Thomism, partly because according to one source “Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to scholasticism a final form, partly because the idea gained ground that only Thomism could infuse vitality into twelfth century scholasticism.” During the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries:

scholastics were put to the background and somewhat forgotten. This has been the source of the view of scholastics as a rigid, formalistic, aged and improper way of doing philosophy. During the catholic scholastic revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the scholastics were repopularized, but with a kind of narrow focus on certain scholastics and their respective schools of thought, notably Thomas Aquinas. In this context, scholasticism is often used in theology or metaphysics, but not many other areas of inquiry.

Although there were many theologians who contributed to the revival of Scholasticism in the late nineteenth century, Pope Pius IX, in various letters and especially Pope Leo XIII in his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* “imparted to neo-Scholasticism its definitive character and quickened its development, setting forth the principles by which the movement is to be guided in a progressive spirit, and by which the medieval doctrine is to take on new life in its modern environment.”

Why New Theologians were critical of Neo-Scholasticism: The New Theologians were critical of how they thought the Church seemed out of touch with the Modern World, and they held a more favorable view on ecumenism than the Church held. They thought that the methods of Scholasticism, or at least the Neo-scholastic variety that prevailed during the first half of the twentieth century, were too rigid and formal to provide sufficient insight into the problems that afflicted modern societies. They believed that Neo-scholasticism had strayed too far away from the original sources of revelation: Scripture and commentaries on it by the Church Fathers. I must add that the so-called New Theologians did not reject Thomism, that is, the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, but they simply added a subjective or experiential dimension to better understand the Faith to Thomas' more objective approach. For example, Pope John Paul II always remained a Thomist at heart, but he supplemented it with a Personalist philosophy. On the other hand, Pope Benedict XVI tends to supplement a Personalist philosophy with an Augustinian theology and philosophy. De Lubac, Chenu and other *Ressourcement* theologians claimed to be Thomists all along, but claimed that their interpretation of his works was more faithful to Thomas than that of the Neo-Thomists or Neo-scholastics. In the final analysis, all of those who could be classified as fitting under the umbrella of the New Theology wanted to reform theology by adding a more personalist dimension to it.

What the New Theologians hoped to achieve: How did the New Theologians hope to achieve their goal of reforming Catholic Theology? Their goal was a return of Catholic Theology to what they perceived as the "original purity of its thought and expression." To achieve their goal, they advocated a "return to the sources" of the Christian Faith: namely, Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers. This methodology has been called by its French name, *ressourcement*, meaning in French a "return to the sources." Moreover, the movement adopted openness to dialogue with the contemporary world on theological issues. They also developed a renewed interest in biblical exegesis, typology, art, literature, and mysticism. Also the New Theologians advocated employing modern philosophy to better understanding the faith whenever it is compatible with Christianity. One major project of the New Theologians was to edit and publish many of the writings of the Church Fathers.

For the New Theologians, doing theology meant doing history, which tells the story of a people's experience. The Neo-Scholasticism in vogue in the Church at the time was, for the most part, ahistorical, that is, non-historical. The history of theology and doctrinal development were hardly considered at all in the work of theologians who were devoted to the method of logic and the syllogism. In the search for religious truth, the Scholastics had refined the Church's doctrines by means of these methods, and for the most part they believed to go back to the theology of the Church Fathers or even to the Bible itself was retrogression or going backwards, rather than progression, or going forward. The New Theologians wanted to replace this methodology with another.

They wanted to add an historical dimension to theology as well as to utilize other modern philosophies compatible with the Faith, especially Personalism. One scholar has said in this regard, "Yet the distinctive approach to historical theology which [the New Theologians] shared

was neither mere detached, scholarly reconstruction nor a futile attempt at what Congar calls 'restitution.' It was rather a creative hermeneutical exercise in which the 'sources' of Christian faith were 'reinterrogated' with new questions, the burning questions of a century in travail. With such twentieth-century questions serving as hermeneutical keys, these theologians of *ressourcement* were able to unlock new rooms in the treasure house of tradition and discover there, surprisingly enough, many of the twentieth-century ideas which neo-Scholasticism neglected or even resisted." After having done quite a bit a study of this matter, I have come to agree. To not agree, I think, would place one in opposition of the authentic theology of Vatican II and Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. This is, of course, what many extreme Traditionalists have done. I think there is great value in the Scholastic approach, but I think that it needs to be supplemented with one that takes into account human experience, human experience as found in the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the development of Tradition.

The term *Nouvelle Théologie* was originally a negative label given the movement by its opponents. Usually the term is attributed to the Dominican theologian Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, one of the greatest Scholastic theologians of the twentieth century, as well as an expert in spiritual theology. The future John Paul II got his doctorate in theology under him at the Dominican Angelicum University in Rome. The charge was that the theologians of the movement did not simply "return to the sources" but instead deviated from the long-standing theological tradition of the Catholic Church, thus creating a "new theology" of their own, a claim that the New Theologians denied. Traditionalists who oppose the New Theology have maintained that Pope Pius XII was condemning it in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, because he believed that it unduly criticized the Old Testament texts and "warned of a resurgence of modernism in many Catholic seminaries." *Humani Generis* condemns the New Theologians, among other things, for its criticism of Neo-scholasticism, the semi-official theology of the Church at the time. The encyclical dismisses the charge that says, "the 'innovators' reproach the 'philosophy of our schools' for 'attending to the intellect alone in the process of thought and neglecting the function of the will and the affections of the spirit,'" It states that "it is one thing to acknowledge the role of these dispositions in knowing the truth, and another thing to assert the power of the will and of sentiment to the detriment of *ratio*, in order to diminish its role."

The New Theology didn't fare very well with the Church during the 1950's. One has to remember that European society was in turmoil from the 1930's to the 1940's with depression and war. In an article entitled "*Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition*", Marcellino D'Ambrosio describes how a broad intellectual and spiritual movement arose within the European Catholic community in response to the challenge presented by a newly secularized society, a challenge that the reigning neo-Scholasticism seemed sorely ill-equipped to meet. Prior to Vatican II, experience played a very minor role in Catholic theology, mainly because of the bad experience the Church had with Modernism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. But during and after the council, the movement had increasingly more influence on Catholic theology and biblical scholarship, not all of it good by any means.

How did Personalism come to be used so widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican II? I referred to an article by Fr Thomas McGovern who wrote regarding this matter:

The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth century.

He points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”

Personalism after Vatican Council II

Social documents after Vatican Council II more and more reflected the philosophy of Personalism in addition to the natural law. Before Vatican II, morality was considered almost exclusively from a natural law point of view. During and after the council, Personalism was combined increasingly with natural law to explain Catholic personal morality and social teaching. From Leo XIII to Pius XII natural law philosophy was primarily used to justify the Church’s doctrines associated with personal and social morality. We see some use of personalist philosophy by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, but it was John Paul II who made considerable use of the personalist philosophy both in personal and social morality and Pope Benedict XVI continued that practice.

Jan Jans, a professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, has said of this matter in an article entitled “Personalism: The Foundations of an Ethics of Responsibility” that:

Any “fundamental” ethical discussion is thus a discussion on this fundamental level of one’s understanding of the human person, or to use a traditional category from western thought, it is a discussion concerning human nature. What is moral can thus be delimited on the basis of the presence or absence of conformity with the natural order or natural law. Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the “turning point” from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Jans tells us that Personalism wasn’t invented during the Council, but “rather, decades of study and reflection conducted by a number of (moral) theologians came to fruition in the Council discussions and found its written form in certain important conciliar documents”, such as, the document “Declaration on Religious Liberty”, (*Dignitatis humanae personae*). The document

begins with the Latin *personae* or person, establishing in Jan's words "a connection between freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, in which both were based on a personalist vision of the human person." He states:

Personalism as the foundation of morality is even more explicitly evident in *Gaudium et spes*, the renowned "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World". . . . Seen and understood from the assumptions and presuppositions of the natural law model, where "objective" stands for immutable and established human nature, personalism is nothing more than a reformulation of the existing teaching related to the natural law. In this case, the "objective criteria" in question are the result of a deductive process and are just as preconceived as the "nature of the person". Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the 'turning point' from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Paul VI also argued in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that the contraceptive mentality will result in men losing respect for women and "no longer (care) for her physical and psychological equilibrium" and will come to "the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment and no longer as his respected and beloved companion."

Professor Janet Smith of Ave Maria University maintains that "This concern reflects what has come to be known as a 'personalist' understanding of morality. The personalist understanding of wrongdoing is based upon respect for the dignity of the human person. The Pope realized that the Church's teaching on contraception is designed to protect the good of conjugal love. When spouses violate this good, they do not act in accord with their innate dignity and thus they endanger their own happiness. Treating their bodies as mechanical instruments to be manipulated for their own purposes, they risk treating each other as objects of pleasure." Pope Paul applied both natural law philosophy and personalist philosophy in reasserting the Church's longstanding tradition position against contraception.

Pope John Paul II also wrote extensively on contraception from a Personalist perspective. One scholar says of this matter, "And although the contribution of the present pope John Paul II to the conception of *Humanae vitae* remains as yet unclear, it is by now quite evident that his 'personalism' is equivalent to such a reformulation of neo-classical natural law ethics." The pope began his discussion of contraception in July 1984 when in the words of one scholar he emphasized "the design of the human body revealing God's truths. It is explained and reaffirmed that the fundamental structure of males and females, which causes sexual intercourse between them to result in both greater intimacy and the capability of generating new life, demonstrates a morally inseparable connection between these two functions." During his discussions, he explains how the bases of the Church's moral teachings on matters of sexuality are scriptural teachings.

Regarding contraception, one source reports the pope as explaining the "moral wrongness of using artificial means to manipulate such a significant aspect of the created body is explained.

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However, the language expressed by bodies, in this context the language expressed during sexual intercourse, is so damaged by the use of artificial contraception that the conjugal act ‘ceases to be an act of love . . . [or] communion of persons’ but rather is a mere bodily union.” The source goes on to say:

On the other hand, the licitness of natural family planning (NFP) methods is held to be evident from the structure of the human body, which has natural periods of fertility and infertility. The morality of these methods was literally designed into the body, and use of them, unlike use of artificial contraception, can actually improve the dialog between couples which is expressed through the language of the body. Throughout these speeches the main emphasis is on the intrinsic goodness of the marital act. The power of love between spouses is said to both lead to and be nourished by the moral use of the conjugal act. Thus, moral exercise of sexual intercourse uses the form of the body to reveal the love of God toward Creation.

He concludes this discussion by saying, “John Paul states many other benefits claimed for moral use of NFP, some from *Humanae Vitae*. These include an increase of marital peace, less spousal selfishness, increased and more positive influence over their children (5 September 1984), and increased dignity of person through following the law of God. Use of NFP is also said to increase appreciation of children, by fostering respect for what is created by God.”

Comparison of Scholasticism with Personalism

Scholars have considered natural law as a classical way of looking at personal and social morality. Classicism understands reality “in terms of the eternal, the immutable, and the unchanging.” Natural law flows from the eternal law and is eternal, objective, and universal, a system of law whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe. The natural law is based on the idea that human nature is fixed for all time and that God's law is eternal and immutable, not subject to changing social, cultural, and historical circumstances. Historical consciousness is not generally an important part of a natural law approach to moral issues. Natural law is based on the eternal law and human reason. This means, of course, that the natural law can't grow or become out-of-date. The natural law places emphasis on a fixed human nature that possesses the human faculties of intellect and free will.

On the other hand, a more personalist approach to understanding and interpreting reality takes into consideration social change and historical developments. One scholar has written that, “Historical consciousness gives more importance to the particular, the contingent, the historical, and the individual.” Personalism, while not rejecting the eternal and immutable, places emphasis on the present and changeableness and is rooted in time or history. On the other hand, the natural law emphasizes the eternal and immutable. Natural law doesn't account very well for changing historical circumstances, while personalism attempts to do so. Also, natural law focuses on the human soul with its faculties of intellect and free will, whereas personalism focuses on the total

human person who has not only a soul with the faculties of intellect and free will, but also a body as well. Personalists tend to place more emphasis on the total human being, body and soul. Furthermore, they look at the universe from the point of view of the person—the subject—and not exclusively as objects existing outside the mind. Moreover, they have an historical consciousness not possessed by those who take an exclusively natural law approach.

Methodological differences between Scholasticism and Personalism: The two philosophies have different methodological approaches to understanding reality and moral issues as well. The scholar that I was just referring to says, “the classicist worldview is associated with the deductive methodology, which derives its conclusions from premises considered to be eternal truths, and that the syllogism was well suited for this deductive approach.” As discussed above, using this approach “one's conclusions are as certain as the premises if the logic is correct.” On the other hand, historical consciousness requires a more inductive approach to understanding reality. Those employing an inductive method begin by observing phenomena and reason to general concepts explaining them

Personalists and others who emphasize experience in human behavior, claim that inductive methodology is more flexible than a deductive one. I think that is generally true. The natural law model recognizes few if any gray areas regarding moral issues, whereas the personalist philosophy is more open to the existence of gray areas, because of the complexity of modern societies and conditions. Some issues that come to mind are capital punishment, ecumenism, religious liberty, and economic matters. Those who take a classicists approach, such as do neo-scholastics, are generally more “conservative” regarding these and other matters, whereas those who look at issues from a personalist perspective are more “progressive.” For example, Pope John Paul II was “progressive” on all four of the issues just mentioned. He took an intensely personalist approach to both personal and social morality, and contrary to dissident theologian Fr. Charles Curran, his works dealing with personal morality, especially sexual morality, are highly personalistic. John Paul’s “Theology of the Body” is about as personalistic as a theologian can get. What bothers Curran so much is that John Paul doesn’t budge an inch on the Church’s long-standing positions opposing contraception, abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and other practices that lead to a culture of death. In other words, he commends John Paul for being “progressive” on social issues, but faults him for being “conservative” on the personal moral issues. To sum up the differences between the Natural Law and Personalist philosophy, one scholar writes:

The difference between a neo-classical approach and personalism can be clearly indicated with the word-pair object-project. A neo-classical approach will tend to base morality on an objective image of the human person as preconceived and immutable. Personalism, on the other hand, views the status of an ethically grounding anthropology as a project, a design, a programme requiring participation, a vocation to be realized. That the above interpretation is not merely theoretical can be demonstrated by analysing the understanding of ‘personalism’ in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968): ‘Human intelligence discovers in the faculty of procreating life, biological laws which are part of the human person.

Difference between personalism and individualism: Some conservative critics of personalism claim that the philosophy is too individualistic. What is the difference between Personalism and Individualism? This is an important distinction, because personalists stress the belief in the uniqueness of the human person by distinguishing between the concepts of “person” and “individual.” Thomas Williams tells us in his article “What is Thomistic Personalism?” that “The major difference is that an individual represents a single, countable unit in a homogeneous species of being, interchangeable with any other member of the species, whereas a person is characterized by his uniqueness and irreplaceability.” In this regard, he quotes the famous Catholic Hans Urs Von Balthasar as saying, “Few words have as many layers of meaning as person. On the surface it means just any human being, any countable individual. Its deeper senses, however, point to the individual’s uniqueness which cannot be interchanged and therefore cannot be counted.” Commenting on this quotation, Williams states:

In this deeper sense persons cannot, properly speaking, be counted, because a single person is not merely one in a series within which each member is identical to the rest for all practical purposes, and thus exchangeable for any other. One can count apples, because one apple is as good as another (i.e., what matters is not that it is this apple, but simply that it is an apple), but one cannot count persons in this way. One can count human beings, as individuals of the same species, but the word person emphasizes the uniqueness of each member of the human species, his incommunicability.

Since individualism is a term that is so widely used and prized in democratic societies such as our own, is there anything wrong with using the concept of individualism with respect to human beings? It depends on what one means by individualism. Williams says that to the extent that individualism is “the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that stresses the moral worth of the individual, and places emphasis on independence and self-reliance, it can be good, but to the extent that it leads to severe social fragmentation [and atomization of society], it is bad.” As one personalist scholar has said, “most personalists have been very sensitive to the sterility of individualism.” He goes on to write:

[Personalists] have taken very seriously the inter-personal relations in which human persons live and move and have their being. The interiority of a person does not isolate a person from others, but rather opens him or her to others. Personalists refuse to think about social life only in terms of rights and of protection against intruders; they also think in terms of solidarity and co-responsibility. The personalism to which we are committed impels us to work towards a new kind of solidarity that is precisely based on the fact that each member, as person, is always more than a mere part of the community.

In other words, human beings are social beings by their nature. Persons are made for relationships with other human beings. They can only be human in relationship with other human persons. Williams commenting on John Paul’s view regarding this matter says, “The person never exists in isolation, and moreover finds his human perfection only in communion with other persons. Interpersonal relations, consequently, are never superfluous or optional to the person, but are constitutive of his inherent make-up and vocation. By underscoring the person’s vocation to

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communion, personalists endeavor to overcome the polarization of individualism on the one hand and collectivism on the other . . . As much as he may strive for independence, the human person necessarily relies on others.”

To prove his point, Williams writes, “In the first place [the human person] depends radically on God as the source of his being. Moreover, from the moment of conception he depends on other persons for his survival and development, and this interdependence is a hallmark of human existence. The human person tends towards society as a basic human value. Thus Aristotle, when considering the good of self-sufficiency, hastens to add that such a term is not employed with reference ‘to oneself alone, living a life of isolation, but also to one’s parents and children and wife, and one’s friends and fellow citizens in general, since man is by nature a social being.’”

Pope John Paul’s and other personalists tie the “law of the gift” that shows in William’s words that “the relation and society of which the person alone is capable, and which is necessary for his realization as a person, consists not only in association, but in love. It consists in a love which gives and gives itself, which receives not only things but other persons as well. Only persons can give love and only persons can receive love. Love has as its true object other persons, not things nor even qualities, but the person himself. Whereas individualism seeks the self above all and views others as means to one’s own profit, love seeks to make of the self a gift to another. Where individualism hopes to find personal realization in self-interest, love realizes that, in the words of the Council, ‘man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.’ Here the antagonism between individualism and personalism manifests itself.” We’ll finish this topic by quoting from Pope John Paul’s “Letter to Families”, where he writes of the antithesis between individualism and personalism:

Love, the civilization of love, is bound up with personalism. Why with personalism? And why does individualism threaten the civilization of love? We find a key to answering this in the council’s expression, a ‘sincere gift.’ Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to ‘establish the truth’ of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else ‘wants’ or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to ‘give’ to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a ‘sincere gift.’ Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish. The real antithesis between individualism and personalism emerges not only on the level of theory, but even more on that of ethos. The ethos of personalism is altruistic: It moves the person to become a gift for others and to discover joy in giving himself. This is the joy about which Christ speaks.”

Karol Wojtyla’s (John Paul II) brand of personalism

Pope John Paul II wrote thirteen encyclical letters in which he employed his personalist philosophy by focusing on the dignity of each human person as ends in themselves, not means to achieving ends. One scholar has said of the pope’s philosophy: “Through this lens, John Paul II

analyzed the problems faced by the contemporary world and provided penetrating insight into their solutions—solutions that focused not on political or economic policy, but on conversion.”

Founding of Phenomenology: Karol Wojtyła grew up around the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, where he attended as a student and later served as a professor. One of his professors in the early 1940’s was Roman Ingarden, who had gotten his doctorate in philosophy under Edmund Husserl in Germany, considered the Father of Phenomenology. Phenomenology has been defined as “the philosophical study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness.” As a philosophical movement it was founded in the early years of the twentieth century by Husserl and was later expanded upon by a circle of his followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany. From there it spread to France, the United States, and elsewhere, often in contexts far removed from Husserl’s early work. One source states that “Phenomenology, in Husserl’s conception, is primarily concerned with the systematic reflection on and study of the structures of consciousness and the phenomena that appear in acts of consciousness.” The field of phenomenology can get pretty fuzzy. Ingarden encouraged him to read Max Scheler and he ended up doing his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on Scheler’s ethics of values, which he presented in 1953. Scheler was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology. He was one of those who further developed Husserl’s philosophical method, and the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called him “the first man of the philosophical paradise.” Even the German philosopher Martin Heidegger thought that all philosophers of the century were indebted to Scheler and praised him as “the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such.” In 1954, Wojtyła defended his doctoral thesis on “An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler.” I might add that he didn’t find Scheler’s personalism very helpful in understanding Catholic morality more deeply.

Wojtyła Had received a solid Aristotelian-Thomistic formation at the Angelicum University in Rome and he used the phenomenological method in the words of one scholar to “develop a creative and original personalistic synthesis, enriching Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology with insights from phenomenology.” Wojtyła later took a professorship of ethics at both the Theological Faculty of Cracow and Lublin’s Catholic University, where he founded the Polish personalistic school, also known as the Lublin School. As one scholar has written, “Like all students of his time, he was well formed in the philosophical principles of Thomist theology, accepting fully St Thomas’ definition of the person as a subject of intellectual and volitional actions. His philosophical approach, however, enabled him to study a dimension of the person not developed in Thomist ontology—the creative aspect of human action and interpersonal relations. Descriptive analysis of human experience through the phenomenological method allowed him to deepen his understanding of the person as a being who entrusts himself to God.”

Thomistic Personalism: Some scholars have classified John Paul’s personalism as Thomistic Personalism. His Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was accomplished at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, which is a Dominican school, otherwise known as the Angelicum.

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There he wrote his doctoral thesis on St. Thomas under the direction of the great Neo-scholastic Thomist Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. As I just mentioned in the paragraph above, he wrote his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on the ethical system of the phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler. Thomistic Personalism was developed by John Paul and others, such as Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Robert Spaemann, and Yves Simon in response to “the dehumanizing forces of determinism and materialism of the nineteenth century, and especially against collectivism on the one hand and individualism on the other.” As one scholar has said of Wojtyła’s personalism, “his personalism was influenced by his experience of Hegelian totalitarianisms in his native Poland, both of Nietzschean (National Socialism) and Marxist (Leninist Communism) stamp. In his 1994 work, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul narrates how interest in man and in his dignity became the main theme of the polemic against Marxism, and this because the Marxists themselves had made the question of man the center of their arguments.”

John Paul experienced both Nazi and Communists totalitarianism directly himself. They developed in nineteenth century Germany and Communism spread to Russia and elsewhere during the twentieth century, including into his native Poland. The nineteenth century saw the dehumanizing effects of the collectivistic philosophies of Hegel and Marx, the deterministic sociology of Comte, the biological determinism and materialism of Darwin, the atheistic collectivistic philosophy of Nietzsche, and the psychological determinism of Freud. Furthermore, the Scientific, Technological, and Industrial revolutions contributed further to the dehumanization of society. The dominance of Liberal Capitalism, with its excessive individualism, also contributed to human misery. John Paul II, as Karol Wojtyła, experienced both Nazi and Communist tyranny.

Thomistic Personalism develops in response to tyranny: John Paul and others developed their brand of personalism to counter the dehumanizing effects of these tyrannies. In the words of one scholar, the Thomist brand of personalism is distinguished from other brands by “adopting a Thomistic metaphysics that posits man’s rational nature as the essential difference between persons and non-personal beings. Based on this key difference, Thomistic personalism focuses on the singularity of persons vis-à-vis other beings, not just as numeric members of a species, but as self-determining subjects possessing a unique dignity and worthy of special regard.” By applying Thomistic metaphysics to their analysis of the human person, the Thomas personalists were able to avoid the subjectivism of other personalist philosophies.

The problem of totalitarianism was to be a major consideration of Vatican Council II. And that was in part due to Karol Wojtyła’s influence on the Council as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow. In light of past Nazi tyranny and present Communist atheism and materialism, he thought that the time was right for the Council in the words of one scholar:

to emphasize the transcendent spiritual order and the uniqueness of human personal existence in the created world. In other words, he concluded, ‘it is appropriate to delineate the question of Christian personalism . . . the brutality of the Nazi occupation as a student and seminarian, and, later, of the tyranny of Communist oppression, gave him a unique perspective on the fundamental truths about man that needed to be proclaimed and

defended by the Church.

He then quotes Cardinal Wojtyla as saying, “The two totalitarian systems which tragically marked our century—Nazism on the one hand, marked by the horrors of war and the concentration camps, and communism on the other, with its regime of oppression and terror—I came to know, so to speak, from within. And so it is easy to understand my deep concern for the dignity of each human person and the need to respect human rights, beginning with the right to life. This concern was shaped in the first years of my priesthood and has grown stronger with time.”

Others who heavily influenced Wojtyla’s personalist philosophy was another of Husserl’s disciples, Dietrich von Hildebrand, who as mentioned above, Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church. During his professorial years Wojtyla produced two important books using the personalistic methodology, one being *Love and Responsibility* in 1960 and the other *The Acting Person* in 1962 as well as numerous essays, lectures, and articles. One scholar has said that his concern for the acting person “arose not from the disputes with Marxism, but rather from his deep personal interest in man.” He says that, “In describing his own calling, John Paul writes that ‘when I discovered my priestly vocation, man became the central theme of my pastoral work.’ From the above, one already foresees the anthropological slant that Wojtyla’s work would take.”

Philosophical Anthropology: What does he mean by anthropological slant? According to Max Scheler, Philosophical Anthropology is the philosophical science concerned with the questions about the essence or nature of man. According to Wojtyla, “The centrality of the human person in moral theology represents a shift of emphasis from a more nomothetic framework to an ethics based on philosophical and theological anthropology.” By “nomothetic” he means a Natural Law framework. While Pope John Paul II, he told the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then headed by Joseph Ratzinger, the future Benedict XVI, that in order to renew moral theology we need to return to Christology and anthropology. To quote one scholar on the matter, his principal objective was “to incorporate into Aquinas’ objectivistic anthropology of the person a more dynamic, personalistic approach.” Pope John Paul was to apply his Thomistic Personalism to both personal ethical issues as well as social issues. As one scholar has said in this regard:

[A]s Pope he has continued to employ personalistic arguments in his magisterial teaching, and in a sense has conferred on personalism a certain authority which raises it above the level of a mere philosophical position. John Paul clearly sees personalism as coalescing with revealed truths about the human person, and therefore as a contribution to theological reflection and renewal. He speaks of ‘regret’ that the Second Vatican Council’s doctrine of the dignity of the human person, who is united through the Covenant to Christ, the Creator and Redeemer, ‘has still not been introduced into theology nor has it been well applied.’ From this, John Paul identifies ‘the need for theological renewal based on the personalistic nature of man.’ He likewise explicitly invokes the personalistic argument in his encyclical letters *Laborem Exercens*.

He wrote in another social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* that “It will be necessary to keep in mind

that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle . . . of all of the Church's social doctrine is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value."

He goes on to quote John Paul's *Centesimus Annus*, which makes it clear that the Church's social doctrine begins with the principle that "there is something due to the person because he is a person." He adds that, "social structures must be evaluated according to how they serve the person. Indeed, John Paul argues that the social order will be stable only if it takes the rights and interests of individual persons into account; any attempt to oppose the common good and the good of individual persons will be doomed to failure." He concludes by again quoting the pope as saying, "What the social order needs is a correct understanding of the human person—a proper anthropology. The church makes her contribution by offering a Christian anthropology—a view of man that is rooted in theology. In this way, one moves from the social order to the human person to the revelation in Christ of what it means to be human. In my case, that progression was from economics to economic personalism to Christian anthropology to theology."

The Law of the Gift

In regard to the "Law of the Gift," John Paul II stated, "[W]e are at our best, we are most fully alive and human, when we give away freely and sacrificially our very selves in love for another." Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, says that, "The Law of the Gift" was "exemplified in the lifelong, life-giving, faithful, intimate union of a man and woman in marriage, which then leads to the procreation of new life and the self-sacrificing love expressed in the care and education of their children." The encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* contains quite a bit of discussion of Pope John Paul's idea of the "Law of the gift", the idea of "gratuitousness." The pope's biographer George Weigel believes that this "might be an interesting attempt to apply to economic activity certain facets of John Paul II's Christian personalism and the teaching of Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes* on the moral imperative of making our lives the gift to others that life itself is to us".

The idea of the "Law of the Gift" was an important concept in Pope John Paul's thinking and now in Pope Benedict's as well. John Paul when still Karol Wojtyla developed the idea in his book, *Love and Responsibility*. He pointed out that marital love has two aspects that must be considered in a successful marriage: the subjective and the objective. The subjective aspect places emphasis on the emotional content of love, what has been called Romantic love. It is nothing more than the natural pleasurable experience of a loving relationship, but it isn't love itself.

In the words of Edward Sri, a prominent Catholic scholar, the objective aspect of love goes beyond the pleasurable feelings that one in love experiences on the subjective level. Interpreting John Paul II, he says "True love involves virtue, friendship, and the pursuit of a common good. In Christian marriage, for example, a husband and wife unite themselves to the common aims of helping each other grow in holiness, deepening their own union, and raising children. Furthermore, they should not only share this common goal, but also have the virtue to help each other get there." He says that one must ask the following questions to determine whether or a not a

relationship is a loving one: “Does the other person truly love me more for who I am or more for the pleasure he receives from the relationship? Does my beloved understand what is truly best for me, and does she have the virtue to help me get there? Are we deeply united by a common aim, serving each other and striving together toward a common good that is higher than each of us? Or are we really just living side by side, sharing resources and occasional good times together while we each selfishly pursue our own projects and interests in life? These are the kinds of questions that get at the objective aspect of love.”

True Marital Love: Karol Wojtyla teaches that what makes marital love different from all other forms of love, such as friendship, is that two people surrender themselves entirely to the other. He calls this “Self-giving Love.” True marital love means totally surrendering oneself to the other without giving up one’s identity, without giving up one’s mind and will. Love is a decision, a free act of the will, to do the will of others, to do what is necessary to promote their total well-being—mental, physical, emotional, and above all spiritual well-being. In self-giving love, a man recognizes in a profound way that his life is not his own. In a true loving marital relationship, Sri tells us that the spouses surrender their own wills to his or her beloved. He says, their “own plans, dreams, and preferences are not completely abandoned, but they are now put in a new perspective.” They are subordinated to the good of their spouse and any children they might have from their marriage. He writes that “many marriages today would be much stronger if only we understood and remembered the kind of self-giving love that we originally signed up for. Instead of selfishly pursuing our own preferences and desires, we must remember that when we made our vows, we freely chose to surrender—we lovingly wanted to surrender—our wills to the good of our spouse and our children.” Jesus gives us the essence of love. He didn’t tell us to feel good about him when he told us what it means to love him. He said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” In other words, loving Jesus is using one’s will to do his will; to freely surrender one’s will to his as he did to his Heavenly Father.

Pope John Paul II applies the concept of self-giving love to the idea of the “Law of the Gift.” The Catholic theologian Edward Sri says of the Pope’s law of self-giving that, “At the heart of this gift of self is a fundamental conviction that in surrendering my autonomy to my beloved, I gain so much more in return. By uniting myself to another, my own life is not diminished but is profoundly enriched.” He claims that in an age of individualism, this idea might be very difficult to understand. He asked why should anyone want to go outside himself to find happiness? Why would one ever want to commit himself to someone else in this radical way? Why would anyone want to give up the freedom to do whatever he wants with his life? However, he says that from a Christian perspective, “life is not about ‘doing whatever I want.’ It is about my relationships—about fulfilling my relationship with God and with the people God has placed in my life. In fact, this is where we find fulfillment in life: in living our relationships well. But to live our relationships well, we must often make sacrifices, surrendering our own will to serve the good of others. This is why we discover a deeper happiness in life when we give ourselves in this way, for we are living the way God made us to live, which is the way God Himself lives: in total, self-giving, committed love.”

Much of what John Paul II and others have said about true marital love can also be said about all other loving relationships as well, including loving the entire human race. Applying self-giving love and the “Law of the Gift” not just to God or spouses and children, but to all of his children, true love then is giving up ones time, talent, treasure, and freedom for the sake of the loved ones, which is expressed in the two commandments of love found in the Ten Commandments: to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, or even better yet, as he has loved us. This applies to all human beings. God has a special love for us all, because he created us in his own image and likeness, and when we fell from his grace he continued to love us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem and save us. All of the Church’s social teachings flow from these two facts.

Theology of the Body

Pope John Paul II’s Personalist philosophy can best be seen in his Theology of the Body, which was the topic of a series of 129 lectures given by the pope during his Wednesday audiences in St. Peter’s Square and the Pope Paul VI Hall between September 1979 and November 1984. According to sources, it was the first major teaching of his pontificate. The pope expanded on the theme in numerous encyclicals, letters, and exhortations. One source outlines the work as covering such topics as:

the unified corporeal and spiritual qualities of the human person; the origins, history and destiny of humanity; the deepest desires of the human heart and the way to experience true happiness and freedom; the truth about man’s need and desire for loving communion derived from the revealed understanding of humanity in the image of a Triune Creator; the truth about God’s original design for human sexuality and thus the dignity of the human person, how it was distorted through sin, and how it has been restored and renewed through the redemption of Jesus Christ; and Catholic teachings about the sacramentality of marriage.

Christopher West, who is a Catholic author and speaker known for his interpretation of Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body, states that the central thesis of John Paul’s Theology of the Body is that “the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world, the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus to be a sign of it.”

One source describes the series as follows: the work consists of two halves and five cycles. The first half, entitled “The Words of Christ” consists of three cycles in which John Paul II establishes an “adequate anthropology.” Cycle 1 looks at the human person as we were created to be “in the beginning” (original man); Cycle 2 addresses human life after original sin, unredeemed and redeemed (historical man). Cycle 3 treats the reality of our life at the end of time when Christ comes back again and history reaches its fulfillment (eschatological man). John Paul II also places his reflections on virginity for the kingdom within the context of Cycle 3. In the second half,

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entitled “The Sacrament” (which refers to the sacrament of marriage), John Paul II addresses the sacramentality of marriage in Cycle 4 and the responsible transmission of human life in Cycle 5. He informs us that some consider Pope Benedict XVI’s first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) “with its exposition of the relation between agape and eros, to be the culmination of John Paul II’s Theology of the Body.”

In the first cycle, the pope deals with divorce, a practice that was accepted by Moses because of the weakness of the Israelites, but that isn't how God established marriage in the first place. According to one scholar,

Prior to sin, the pope accounts, man and woman's desire for one another was perfectly oriented in a Sacramental way that pointed them toward God's ultimate plan for humanity: the marriage of Christ the bridegroom with his bride the Church. Throughout Sacred Scripture, the most common reference that Christ uses when speaking of heaven is that of a wedding feast. Thus, marriage is intended to be a union that draws us deeper into the mystery of our creation and provides a foretaste of the heavenly marriage between Christ and his Church, where man and woman are no longer given in marriage. In heaven, the eternal wedding feast, men and women have now arrived at their ultimate destination and no longer have need of the Sacrament (or sign) of marriage.

John Paul treats the subject of adultery in his second cycle as discussed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is recorded as saying in Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." Rather than taking a strictly natural law way of explaining this passage, the pope explains this as looking at another person to desire them in a reductive way, that is they are viewed as merely an object of desire. Pope John Paul II says this seems to be a key passage for theology of the body.”

The pope analyzes the Resurrection of the body in the third cycle by using the instance where Jesus answered the Sadducees when they come to him and asked him about a woman who had married seven brothers, and he considers celibacy and virginity in the fourth cycle. In the fifth cycle he discusses the sacrament of marriage.

In his *Theology of the Body Explained* Christopher West, who has been teaching John Paul's theology of the body since the late 1990s, wrote, “John Paul's TOB is most often cast as an extended catechesis on marriage and sexual love. It certainly is that, but it is also so much more. Through the mystery of the Incarnate person and the biblical analogy of spousal love, John Paul II's catechesis illumines the entirety of God's plan for human life from origin to *eschaton* with a splendid supernatural light.”

West’s approach to the Theology of the Body has been criticized by prominent Catholics, especially Alice von Hildebrand, widow of twentieth century theologian Dietrich von Hildebrand who was a profound expert on the subject of spousal love. She severely criticized West's approach, which she

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considers a “hyper-sexualized approach to the Theology of the Body.” In this regard, she writes, “My general criticism of Christopher West is that he does not seem to grasp the delicacy, reverence, privacy, and sacredness of the sexual sphere. He also underestimates the effects of Original Sin on the human condition.”

George Weigel, the noted biographer of John Paul, has described Theology of the Body as “one of the boldest reconfigurations of Catholic theology in centuries.” He goes on to say it is a “kind of theological time bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences, sometime in the third millennium of the Church.” Weigel believes that it has barely begun to “shape the Church's theology, preaching, and religious education” but when it does “it will compel a dramatic development of thinking about virtually every major theme in the Creed.”

Nonetheless, Weigel realizes that there are major obstacles to the theology of the body becoming the standard for moral theology. He states that “The Pope is very hard to read and understand: The density of John Paul's material is one factor. A secondary literature capable of translating John Paul's thought into accessible categories and vocabulary is badly needed.” And, Weigel believes, the dominant liberal views on such issues as women's rights, birth control, abortion and divorce are also obstacles to the 'theology of the body' becoming known or accepted.

In conclusion, Pope John Paul II's theology of the body in particular and theology in general is an attempt to blend Aristotelian-Thomistic with personalist philosophy. He saw the importance of Thomistic philosophy and theology, yet while combining it with a personalist philosophy to provide a deeper understanding of the human person and his behavior, he saw the limitations of a strictly phenomenological approach. One source quotes him as saying:

If we wish to speak rationally about good and evil, we have to return to St. Thomas Aquinas, that is, to the philosophy of being. With the phenomenological method, for example, we can study experiences of morality, religion, or simply what it is to be human, and draw from them a significant enrichment of our knowledge. Yet we must not forget that all these analyses implicitly presuppose the reality of the Absolute Being and also the reality of being human, that is, being a creature. If we do not set out from such 'realist' presuppositions, we end up in a vacuum.

SECTION IV. PRAYER AND HOLINESS

By Monsignor Lawrence Moran & Ronald J. Eldred

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between prayer and holiness is the focus of this essay. The two go together; one cannot exist without the other. Those who are holy pray and those who pray are holy; in fact, prayer is one of the principal means with which to achieve holiness. Through prayer we receive the graces from God to practice the works of mercy and to grow in the virtues. Our objective is to learn to practice one to achieve the other. Through prayer we can achieve union with God. The closer we come into union with God, the more God communicates with us.

Our prayer life reflects the intimacy of our relationship with God just as our conversations with our parents, siblings, and friends reflect the intimacy of our relationships with them. Just as we must go through progressive stages of intimacy with them as our relationships grow, we must go through an increasingly intimate relationship with God.

The Catholic Church has accumulated a vast wealth of knowledge about prayer and holiness over the centuries. Prayer has a systematic structure and this essay will provide you with some of the most important knowledge you need with which to pray well.

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

Mother Angelica of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) used to begin her weekly live broadcast with the statement, “We are all called to be great saints.” This echoes the call to holiness that the Catholic Church has made to the People of God down through the ages. First Jesus called



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his followers to holiness and after he ascended into Heaven his Apostles continued to call them. In the centuries that followed, the Fathers of the Church repeatedly called Christians to holiness, as did numerous Church councils. For instance, Vatican Council II states “He [God] has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness,” (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church or *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II, “The People of God” 9). Pope John Paul II, who repeatedly preached this theme, said in his General Audience on November 24, 1993 that “The Church is holy and all her members are called to holiness.”



St. Teresa was one of the greatest saints of all time. She was born at Avila in Spain in 1515. She entered the Carmelites and made great progress in the way of perfection and was granted mystical revelations. Wishing to share in the spiritual renewal of the Church of her time, she began to live her religious life more ardently and soon attracted many companions, to whom she was like a mother. She also helped in the reform of the friars, and in this had to endure great trials. She wrote books which are renowned for their depth of doctrine and which showed her own spiritual experiences. She was made a Doctor of the Catholic Church for her spiritual writings and declared a saint for her achievement of union with God. She died at Alba in 1582.

Prior to Vatican II it was assumed that achieving the height of holiness was for cloistered nuns and monks who lived their lives in accordance with the Evangelical Counsels of strict poverty, chastity, and obedience. It was believed that perfect holiness could be achieved only by persons isolated from the attractions and distractions of the world. The great majority of persons outside the cloister who had to constantly fight the world, the flesh, and the devil would have to be satisfied with achieving something much less than perfection. This ignored the fact that countless holy persons over the ages, such as St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Teresa of Lisieux, had taught that the spiritual life associated with prayer and holiness is something that we are all called to—adults, children, and teen-agers alike—and not something reserved only for the religious. Reflecting the change in attitude of the Church after Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity . . . All are called to holiness . . . Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (No. 2013). Jesus says the words about the perfection of his Father in Matthew 5:48 at the end of the Sermon on the Mount; therefore, the Sermon is our principal

guide to holiness. In this essay we are going to discuss the meaning of holiness and how to grow in holiness so that we can achieve sainthood in Heaven forever.

THE MEANING OF HOLINESS

Only God is holy and we are holy only to the extent that we are holy, to the extent God lives in our souls. God is holy, because he is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete,

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possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; we possess them only by sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us. We have God's life in us when the Trinity dwells in our souls. Baptism washes away the stain of Original Sin and makes us Temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity (John 14:23). We want to emphasize that grace is not God; it is his life within us; it is our participation in his life, our participation in the inner life of the Trinity. As we will see later in our discussion, sanctifying grace restores the holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, of being made holy.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, CHANNEL OF GRACE

Jesus established his Church, the Catholic Church, to help us achieve sainthood and get to Heaven. When Jesus ascended into Heaven, he did not abandon us; he did not leave us orphans as he said he wouldn't. Ten days afterwards at Pentecost he sent his Holy Spirit to institute his One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—the Catholic Church. He established his Church to continue his presence in the world and to provide us with the means to achieve holiness and get to Heaven. The Church administers the Sacraments, the means with which we receive God's sanctifying grace and actual graces. Jesus deposited all of the graces he earned by his suffering and death in his Church, what is called the Deposit of Grace. Since he is infinite, the amount of grace is also infinite, and every person who has ever lived, is living, and will ever live have drawn, are drawing, or will draw from this deposit.

Although God created us in his image and likeness—with an immortal soul and the faculties of intellect and a free will—we are like him only to the extent that we are holy, only to the degree we are like Jesus. To be holy our will must be in full conformance with the will of God; we must obey his commandments, we must do his will in all things. The Catholic Church provides us with the means to achieve the holiness to which God has called us. The Church teaches that we can rise above our fallen nature and become holy so we can become adopted sons and daughters of God the Father Almighty and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus. The more one brings his or her will into conformance with God's will, the holier he or she becomes, the more like Jesus he or she becomes.

Achieving holiness isn't easy in this wicked world. The Catholic Church provides us with the weapons with which to do battle against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. As we discussed earlier, our journey toward achieving holiness begins with our Baptism. The sacrament removes the stain of Original Sin and infuses us with sanctifying grace. To sanctify means to make holy, so sanctifying grace makes us holy. The other sacraments provide us with the means to achieving greater holiness. After our Baptism, as we become more holy, we grow in friendship with God and God increasingly communes with us in increasingly more intimate ways. Nonetheless, we shall never see God totally as he is—the Beatific Vision—until we are completely purged of our unholiness, which for most of us will not happen until our deaths and cleansing hopefully in Purgatory.

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SALVATION HISTORY

To fully understand our need for Baptism and what it does for us, we must have knowledge of Salvation History. We will provide only a brief outline of the subject here. To begin, let's examine what is meant by Salvation History. Salvation History is the story of the creation, fall, and redemption of humankind. Central to this story is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose story includes his conception, birth, life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. Salvation history is found in Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors, and the history of the Catholic Church. It is found especially in the Holy Bible and Tradition as interpreted by the Magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Salvation history ties everything together for us; it relates the Old Testament with the New Testament.

The Old Testament (Covenant)—The Creation: Our story begins in the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament, which describes how God the Holy Trinity created the universe and all that is



in it in six days and rested on the seventh. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most important mystery of our Faith, and the source of all other mysteries. The Holy Trinity is a perfectly happy family consisting of three divine persons that need nothing to fulfill themselves and who live in intimate loving communion. The Trinitarian Family is one of relationships. The Father eternally generates the Son; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, each constituting separate Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is important to remember that the Holy Trinity is only one God consisting of three divine Persons, because they all share the same substance or being, which makes them co-equal in power, glory, majesty, and wisdom and all of them have existed from all eternity.

The Book of Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. He created everything out of his abundance, out of his goodness, wisdom, and love and a desire to demonstrate and communicate his glory, not out of any defi-

ciency. Of this the *Catechism* states, “God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty—this is the glory for which God created them” (No. 319).

After having created the heavens and the earth, Genesis tells us that on the sixth day God created the first humans in his image and likeness. Holy Scripture tells us that God said regarding the creation of man, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

Why God created man: God created man to know, love, and serve him so he could be happy with him in Heaven forever. God placed Adam and Eve in an earthly paradise, the Garden of Eden, where they and their children were to till and keep it and cooperate in partnership with him to perfect it (Genesis 2:15). Originally God created our first parents and all of their descendants to be members of his family. They and their descendants were to be God's adopted sons and daughters and to share in the inner life of the Trinitarian Family. The Second Person is the Father's Son by nature; Adam and Eve were his son and daughter by adoption and by grace. God's intention was that they and their descendants were to live in happiness with him forever. They and all of their children were to be the Father's heirs. The natural family, consisting of husband, wife, and children, is patterned after the Trinitarian family; it should be the mirror image of the Trinitarian family.

God created man in his image and likeness: To make them worthy of being his adopted children, God created the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in his image and likeness. The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* tells us that term “image” is a phrase used in Genesis 1:26-27 to designate the special superiority of man over the other works of God's visible creation. This “image of God” is the spiritual part of man's nature, which includes his soul and its faculties of intellect and free will. In these natural perfections man reflects, in a limited and imperfect way, God, the Infinite Spirit, whose intelligence and freedom are supremely perfect. Man's faculties give him the ability to communicate and have relationships, abilities possessed by the Trinity at the supreme level. Intellect gives man the ability to think and free will the ability to make decisions. We shall discuss below how through sanctifying grace and the infused virtues man's nature is elevated to a super-natural plane of being and acting. The *Catechism* states:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead (No. 357).

Humans are in God's image in that they possess a created immortal spirit or soul; an intellect that is finite, but possessed infused knowledge before the Fall; a human will that is finite, but possessed considerable strength before the Fall. Adam and Eve received three types of gifts from God at their

creation:

- **Natural:** What human beings are and have when they are born: a body and rational soul with the faculties of intellect and will.
- **Preternatural:** Includes infused knowledge, absence of concupiscence (integrity), and bodily immortality.
- **Supernatural:** Qualities possessed only by God, but shared with humans in the form of actual and sanctifying grace.



God created man in his likeness: In likeness, God created Adam and Eve in Original Holiness and Original Justice. By holiness Adam and Eve were originally like God who is whole, perfect, sound, blessed, hallowed, sacred, and complete, possessing integrity, goodness, and righteousness. God possesses these qualities by nature; they possessed them only by God's sanctifying grace, which was God's life in them. Because they possessed sanctifying grace and were made holy by the Trinity dwelling in them, they lived at the supernatural level.

By Original Justice is meant that our first parents possessed an intensely intimate friendship with God and lived in harmony with themselves and with the creation around them. Justice is often defined as giving someone his due; to give him what he deserves, what he has coming. Man is most just when he renders to God love and obedience, when he obeys his commandments and does his will. In their original state, Adam and Eve were just with respect to God, thus they lived in a state of Original Justice. Of this the *Catechism* states, "By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed. As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die. The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called 'original justice'" (No. 376).

Although life in the Garden of Eden was heaven on earth and Adam and Eve possessed sanctifying grace, experienced perfect natural happiness, and lived in close friendship with God, they did not yet possess the Beatific Vision, the vision of God himself. That was something they could enjoy only after passing a test of their love and devotion to him. He wanted his adopted children to love him by a free choice of their wills. If they had not possessed this ability, they would not have possessed God's image whose will is absolutely free.

Adam and Eve fall from God's grace: Tragically, our first parents lost Original Holiness and Original Justice for themselves and their children by freely choosing to commit the first sin—the Original Sin. God told them they could have everything for their enjoyment in their earthly paradise except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by Lucifer in the disguise of a serpent, first Eve then Adam in their pride ate the forbidden fruit. Pride is the worst

sin of all, because one guilty of pride is trying to be God. The serpent had tempted them by telling them that they would not die if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, but instead would be gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

Genesis states of the Forbidden Tree, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die’” (Genesis 2:15-17). The *Catechism* says of this tragic event, “The entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents” (No. 379).

The terrible consequences of Original Sin:

Upon discovering that Adam and Eve had disobeyed his commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God said to the woman, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:16-19). In other words, as St. Paul says, “For the wages of sin is death”



(Romans 6:23). The *Catechism* nicely summarizes what was just quoted from Holy Scripture where it tells us:

Although it is proper to each individual, Original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of Original Holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin—an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence. Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases Original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle (No. 405).

To quote the *Catechism* further on the consequences of Original Sin:

The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history (No. 400).

As a result of their original sin, Adam and Eve fell from God's grace and were driven out of the Garden of Eden into a world of suffering and sorrow, death and destruction. When they were banished from the Garden, they entered into a world of darkness and despair, a world where war, famine, disease, pestilence, natural disasters, accidents, civil disorders, crime, and terrorism were to abound, a place where hatred, suffering, sorrow, death, and destruction were to triumph. It was not long before one of their sons committed the first murder in history; Cain, killed his brother, Abel. Worst of all, they no longer lived at the supernatural level, because the Trinity no longer dwelled in their souls; they were what Catholics call in the state of mortal sin, their souls were dead because God no longer dwelled in them. They and all of their descendants would live only at the natural level.

How Original Sin affects man's image of God: In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs until redeemed by Christ. In the fallen state, all human beings inherited diminished intellects and weakened wills as well as the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which is death. At death the soul is separated from the body and the body decomposes. The soul will be reunited at the end of time with a glorified body for those who are already in Heaven or going there. Even after committing Original Sin, humans still possess the image of God, because they were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin.

Of the three types of gifts Adam and Eve had received at their creation, the natural gifts of intellect was diminished and of free will weakened. The preternatural gifts of infused knowledge, integrity, and bodily immortality were lost for good. The biggest loss of all was the loss of the supernatural gift of God's sanctifying grace, the very loss of God's indwelling in their souls.

How Original Sin affects man's likeness of God: Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. God is holy and they were no longer holy because God no longer lived in their souls. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will (although weakened by sin). They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the

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Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. However, there was still hope, for it was in the father's plan to send his son into the world some day to redeem humankind, to once again make them his children

Why did all of Adam and Eve's descendants inherit the stain of Original Sin? Some would say that this doesn't seem fair. In this regard, the *Catechism* says:

How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man'. By this 'unity of the human race' all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called 'sin' only in an analogical sense: it is a sin 'contracted' and not 'committed'—a state and not an act (No. 404).

Original Sin destroyed the harmony between God and man, the inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and the harmony between our first parents and all of creation.

By their original sin, Adam and Eve lost their friendship with God and their place in the Trinitarian Family. Since they were banished from God's Family and disinherited, all they had to pass on to their descendants was the stain of Original Sin. Since by disobedience our first parents lost Original Holiness and Justice, we the children inherited the stain of their Original Sin, for they no longer possessed these qualities to pass on to us. In spite of this man remained in God's image, but was “deprived of the glory of his likeness.”

Humans still possess the image of God, although damaged: Even after inheriting the stain of Original Sin, man still possesses the image of God, because unlike the fallen angels who were cast into Hell when they rebelled against God, man was not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. The angels possessed intellects so far above humans, and wills so much stronger, that God didn't give them another chance. Because human beings had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will. In this regard, the *Catechism* states, In spite of this “man remains 'in the image of God,' in the image of the Son, but is deprived 'of the glory of God,' of his 'likeness’” (No. 705). However, Original Sin diminished their intellects and weakened their wills, and they were to suffer from the urge to commit actual sin, which is called concupiscence. Moreover, in the fallen state they were subject to suffering, sorrow, and death. Yet God still loved them and considered them redeemable, capable of being freed from the power of Satan and the slavery of sin.

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In other words, after the Fall, human beings remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), but they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice). Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness.

Reasons for hope: Although humans had fallen from grace and had lost God's friendship, God continued to love them, so much so that it was in his plan—His divine providence—to one day send his Son into the world to redeem humankind. Redeem means to pay for something, and in this instance we mean that Jesus Christ paid for all of the damage caused by Original and actual sins. It was Jesus Christ, the son of God the Father, who restored the dignity of man by becoming a man himself. It was He who made it possible for man once again to become holy and friends with God, to once again become children of God the Father.

Salvation History is the story of God's plan to restore mankind to the Trinitarian family, to make human beings once again children of God, i.e., sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus. The *Catechism* says, "The Son Himself became man and assumed the human image and restored it in the likeness of the Father by giving it again its Glory." By taking on the image of man, Jesus was to restore man's likeness to its original glory. As it says in the Mass, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity.

Why did God allow sin to enter the world? The *Catechism* asked this precise question:

But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, 'Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away.' And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, 'There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good.' Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'" (No. 412).

I used to teach religion in the St. Patrick Middle School, and I asked my 8th Grade students that question. One of my students answered very perceptibly that God let Adam and Eve sin so that he could one day show the human race how much he loved them by sending his only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for their salvation (See John 3:16). One of our classrooms at John Paul II Catholic High School where I taught until retirement has above one of the boards, "The worst thing that ever happened caused the greatest thing that ever happened, for us."

God's covenants with a Chosen People

The Old Testament (Covenant): After the Fall, God began to gradually reveal himself to humankind. To begin the process of restoration of the human race to the Trinitarian Family, he

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made covenants or agreements with a chosen people, the Israelites. The story of the old covenant is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the old covenant God promised to make the Chosen People a great and numerous people, provide them with land, and make them prosperous if they, in turn, worshipped him as the one true God and obeyed his commandments. God's revealed his commandments to Moses at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. The covenant was sealed by sacrificing animals. In the Old Testament God was preparing the world for the redemption of the world when he was to send his only begotten Son to save us.

The Chosen People invariably broke their covenants with God when they prospered. God repeatedly sent prophets to remind them of their covenants with him, instruct and encourage them, call them to repentance, and to warn them what would happen to them if they didn't repent, which they seldom did until punished. After a period of punishment, they usually returned to God for a brief while, but as soon as they prospered again, the sordid cycle started all over again. Much of the Old Testament is taken up with describing these cycles of prosperity, backsliding, warning, punishment, and repentance. In time God tired of this repeating cycle and began to reveal through his prophets, such as Isaiah and Daniel, that he would one day send a Messiah who would save his people from their sins.

New Testament (Covenant): The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled by the New Testament, the New and Everlasting Covenant. The New Testament is the story of the redemption of mankind. It describes the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. God had always kept his side of covenant relationships, but the Chosen People rarely kept theirs. The only way that humans could keep their end of the covenant was for God himself to become a man and make a new and everlasting covenant on their behalf. The New and Everlasting Covenant, sealed by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made present at each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, fulfills the covenants of the Old Testament, the covenants that God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. God promises in the new covenant to provide faithful Christians the blessings described in the Sermon on the Mount, the Last Supper, and elsewhere in the Gospel. If we obey his commandments, our eternal reward will be Heaven.

The Incarnation

Next to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation is the most important doctrine of the Catholic Faith. The Incarnation occurred when the Word became Flesh and dwelled among us. The prophecies of the prophets were fulfilled hundreds of years afterwards when the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear a son who would save the world (Matthew 1:20-25, Luke 1:26-37). At her consent, the Word (the Second Person of the Holy Trinity) was made Flesh and dwelled among us (Luke 1:26-38); in other words, the Word became incarnate (from the Latin *incarnare*, which means to make flesh).

St. John begins his Gospel with the words: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh

and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:1-2; 14). John is here talking about the Incarnation, which means to embody or be made of flesh. At the Incarnation, Jesus Christ united his divine Person with a human body and soul. Thus, he possesses two natures, human and divine. The union of his divine and human natures is called the Hypostatic Union. This means that his two natures, divine and human, are united in one Divine Person. He is true God and true man. It is very important to stress here that even though Jesus possesses two natures, he is only one person, the same Person as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He possesses only divine personhood; he does not possess human personhood. He shares his divine intellect and will with the Father and the Holy Spirit; otherwise, if each of the persons of the Holy Trinity had separate intellects and wills, there would exist three separate gods, not one. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10) or “I came from the father” (John 15:28) or “[He] who sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).

The Incarnation was the most important event that ever occurred in history, because every event before was affected by it and every event that followed until the end of time was or will be affected by it. In fact, we even ascertain our time from the birth of Jesus Christ: before Christ, B.C., and Anno Domini, A.D. (in the Year of our Lord). The Incarnation was so important, because it raised the dignity and worth of every single human being. Being created in God's very image had already given humans inestimable dignity and worth; the Incarnation even raised this dignity and worth even further yet, because God himself had become a human, making it possible for all humans to elevate their status to the supernatural level, of course, by adoption and by grace, not by nature. Because God created us in his image and likeness, it gives us the motive for loving and caring for others. In fact, Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loves us (John 15:12), which is a tall order. It is much greater order than loving our neighbor as ourselves, because our capacity to love others depends on the degree to which we love ourselves. An added reason for loving others is the Redemption of humankind, because God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son into the world to redeem it (John 3:16). Moreover, the Incarnation increases our worth and dignity even further yet by restoring us to God's family.

Why did Jesus Christ become man? Jesus became a man for the following reasons: to restore us to God's Family; to elevate our human nature so we can share in his divinity; to redeem us by suffering and dying on the Cross; to suffer and die for our sins; to show how much he loves us; to give us hope; to set for us an example of perfect holiness and virtue; to help us reach perfection; and to give us an example and motive for loving others.

Nonetheless, the Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's likeness. We are made friends with him once again only at Baptism, whether of water, blood, or desire. The restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin. Baptism makes us right with God as our Protestant brothers and sisters would say. Before Baptism we were dead to sin. At Baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6). Also, Baptism makes us holy, because God the Trinity, who is holiness itself, comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23).

THE ROLE OF BAPTISM IN OUR LIVES



Baptism restores us to God's family; it makes us children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his son Jesus. It is through grace that we participate in the inner life of the Trinity. In Baptism we receive sanctifying grace, which is the life of God within us; it is our participation in the life of the Trinitarian Family; it is the Holy Trinity dwelling in our souls. The *Catechism* says that grace “is our participation in [God's] life. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an ‘adopted son he can henceforth call God ‘Father,’ in union

with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church” (No.1997).

Another way of conceiving of grace is our participation in God’s life. Grace is like a beam of light from God that penetrates our souls. It has been said that Jesus Christ himself is the sacrament, “because he gave his life to save mankind. His humanity is the outward sign or the instrument of his Divinity. It is through his humanity that the life of the Father and the Holy Spirit come to us as grace through the sacraments. It is Jesus Christ alone who mediates the sacraments to allow grace to flow to mankind.”

Jesus instituted his Church and gave us his Apostles and their successors to shepherd his flock after his Ascension into Heaven. The Church—Christ's Mystical Body—itself is a sacrament through which God's graces and mercy flow. The Apostles and their successors, the bishops and clergy down through the ages, minister the seven sacraments, including Baptism, to help us lead good lives in this world, and to help us reach Heaven in the next.

St Paul tells us that before baptism we were dead to sin. At baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ; we were born again. In this regard he states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives

he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

The effects of Baptism

When one is baptized, he or she receives Sanctifying Grace. To sanctify means to make holy. Only God is Holy, so we become holy only to the extent that God dwells in our souls. Sanctifying grace is that which makes us holy. God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Sanctifying grace is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life. We become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls (John 14:23). Our baptism gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus Christ. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity.

Our friendship with God began at our baptism. It is then that we experienced the infusion of Sanctifying Grace and began to live at the supernatural level. At baptism we experience several effects, which are explained below.

- **Removal of Original Sin:** Baptism removes the stain of Original Sin inherited from our first parents.
- **Temples of the Holy Spirit:** By washing away the stain of Original Sin, baptism prepares our souls for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwells the Father and the Son. This is known as the doctrine of the indwelling Trinity. In this regard, Jesus said, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23). St. Paul speaks of the indwelling Trinity several places. For example: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). In another place he says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19). And in another, "Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (2 Timothy. 1:14).
- **Supernatural life:** Sanctifying grace elevates the human soul from the natural to the supernatural level, even above the angelic level, because the sanctified soul participates in God's very nature.
- **Just and pleasing to God:** Sanctifying grace restores holiness and justice lost by Adam and Eve. Sanctifying grace makes us holy; it sanctifies us, as was Adam and Eve before their fall from God's grace. Sanctification is the process of being sanctified, being made holy. Sanctifying grace also justifies us; it makes us friends with God and restores the

harmony between us and God lost by our first parents. Justification is the process of being justified, which establishes harmony between us, God, our neighbor, and the creation around us.

- **Members of Christ's Mystical Body:** We become members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church at baptism. The Church is God's family.
- **Adopted children of God the Father:** We became adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus at baptism. Regarding this St. Paul said, "You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, 'Abba!' (i.e., Father). The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans. 8:15-16).
- **Brothers and sisters to Jesus:** Since we become adopted children of God the Father at Baptism, we also become brothers and sisters to his son Jesus.
- **Coheirs with Christ:** Since sanctifying grace makes us participators in the divine life that Christ completely possesses, it follows that we are his brothers and sisters, for as St. Paul tells us God has predestined us "to share the image of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers" (Romans 8:29). God loves us the way he loves his son and looks at Jesus as our brother and grants us the same heritage as he possesses.
- **Heirs of Heaven:** As God's children we became heirs to Heaven, for in this regard St. Paul says, "But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ" (Romans. 8:17). Moreover, on adopting us as his children, God infuses sanctifying grace into our souls, giving us a participation in the divine nature itself.
- **Capacity for supernatural merit:** We must be in state of sanctifying grace in order for our good works to earn merit toward eternal life. Supernatural merit requires the possession of the supernatural life. While in the state of mortal sin, our good works earn us nothing with respect to eternal life; however, by good works we can earn actual graces that motivate us to return to God's family.
- **Intimate union with God:** Although we are united to God before our baptism in a natural manner by virtue of his essence, presence, and power, sanctifying grace increases this union to an infinitely higher level of union, which is participation in the divine life itself. Sanctifying grace creates a loving relationship between God and us and makes us his friends and adopted children, for, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

In summary, sanctifying grace transforms the soul, making it capable of joining the infinite knowledge and love of God. This ability begins in this life at our baptisms. Baptism cleansed us of the stain of Original Sin and made us temples of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity came to dwell in our

souls. This made us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters to his Son Jesus as well as heirs to Heaven. We are members of God's family, his Church. However, we can achieve full union with God only in the next life, and then only after our souls have undergone whatever cleansing that might be necessary in Purgatory. But since the vision of God is infinite, and we are finite, we have unlimited capacity to increase sanctifying grace in our souls. We can do this by a lifetime of study and meditation on the Faith, a frequent reception of the sacraments, the development of the virtues, the performance of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, continual prayer and penance, and loving God with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

Achieving Heaven fulfills our longing for God. To quote the great St. Augustine in this regard, “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (*Confessions* 1,1). We often look forward to getting or achieving more things, foolishly thinking that they will satisfy us, but we soon tire of them or find them less satisfying than when we get or achieve them. Anticipation is always greater than realization. Nothing less than God himself can really satisfy us. Only those who go to Heaven will rest in peace. Those who fail to achieve Heaven and go to Hell never find rest.

Baptism necessary for salvation

The Nicene Creed that Catholics profess at every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass states: We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist told the crowds that the one who was coming after him would baptize not with water alone, but with water and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:15-16). The Bible says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark. 16:16). Jesus said to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5). He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them (Matthew 28:19). The *Catechism* tells us that “The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. It states that “In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism” (No.1277). It states elsewhere that “The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit’” (No. 1257). Numerous other places in the Bible make reference to the need for Baptism (For examples see: Titus 3:5; Acts 2:37-38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; Gal. 3:27; Hebrews 10:22).

Baptism by Desire or Blood: The Church teaches that for those, through who no fault of their own, who do not undergo baptism of water can achieve God's sanctifying grace and membership into his family by a Baptism of desire or of blood. The baptism of desire applies both to “those who, while wishing to be baptized, die before receiving the sacrament” and “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of conscience” (Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council). The

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Catechism states, “For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament” (No. 1259). Furthermore, “Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized” (No. 1281). Regarding the Baptism of blood, the *Catechism* says:

The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament” (No. 1258). The Baptism of blood refers to the martyrdom of those believers who were killed for the faith before they had a chance to be baptized. This was a common occurrence in the early centuries of the Church, but also in later times in missionary lands. The baptism of blood has the same effects as the baptism of water.

GROWING IN HOLINESS

The holiness we receive at baptism is just a start to our growth in holiness. Let's use an analogy to illustrate our point. Let's imagine that our souls are like containers that when full will hold only so much grace. This means at baptism the container holds all of the grace that one is capable of holding at that moment. However, since God is infinite there is still room for indefinite increases of his grace. This means that the size of the container can grow as we grow in holiness, as we acquire more of God's life in us. Assuming that we are in the state of sanctifying grace at our deaths, the size of the container, that is the amount of grace that we possess at that time, will determine the amount of happiness that we will forever experience in Heaven.

Mary, Full of Grace: Unlike Mary who was full of grace at her conception, we are incapable of this because of the stain of Original Sin on our souls. Baptism re-moves the stain, but we still have to suffer the consequences of a wounded human nature. Because she was to become the mother of God, it was only fitting that she be perfect in every way, therefore, she was conceived without any stain of Original Sin; she was immaculately conceived. Moreover, she was so full of God's grace that she never committed an actual sin during her life. In fact, she never even committed an imperfection, because she always chose the best of good choices when confronted with several of them. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was "full of grace" at her conception. This means that she had the maximum capacity of grace or the life of God in her soul at that moment. But since that vision is infinite, there was still room for indefinite increases even in one who is full of grace at the start. Using our analogy of the container representing the soul, her container simply got larger throughout her life. Her growth in holiness was exponential growth, or 2, 4, 16, 32, 64, and so on into infinity, instead of arithmetic growth, which is 1,2,3,4,5 etc., as only we are capable.



Because she was to become the mother of God, it was only fitting that Mary be perfect in every way, therefore, she was conceived without any stain of Original Sin; she was immaculately conceived.

Of course, God does not grow in us; he is infinite; he has no potential for growth. In Scholastic terms he is pure act, he simply is, with no potency, no potential for growth. If God could grow, he wouldn't be perfect, he wouldn't be self-subsistent being. So what does it mean to say that we grow in God's grace? Our way of conceptualizing a growth in grace is that growing in grace means a fuller participation in God's life, the life of the Holy Trinity. When the Trinity dwells in our souls we are said to be in a state of sanctifying grace; God's life is within us and we can participate in

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his life, in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. In fact, we can't grow in grace without possessing sanctifying grace; our good deeds have no merit without grace.

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Practically speaking, the growth in holiness means that as one becomes more holy, he or she acquires more of the infused theological virtues of faith, hope charity, more of the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, and the others. At Baptism God infuses into our souls the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are known as the Theological virtues. We will define and discuss the meaning of these terms later in this essay, but for now it is enough to know that the infusion of these virtues first happens at Baptism. However, during the early times of our lives these virtues lie dormant and the capacity for growth increases as we grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and above all spiritually. In other words, the size of our containers is expanding as well. This gives us the capacity for more grace, more Faith, Hope, and above all Love, love of God and neighbor.

Furthermore, at Baptism we receive an infusion of the moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude and all of the virtues that flow from them. These are called the Cardinal virtues, because all of the other virtues hinge on them. Cardinal derives from the Latin *Cardo*, meaning hinge. Although these virtues exist and operate at the natural level, which is the natural law, the law of God written on our hearts, they are also infused virtues existing and operating at the supernatural level when we possess God's grace. We will also discuss these virtues below in the essay.

Moreover, at Baptism we receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The Sacrament of Confirmation is like a booster shot that reinforces and raises these gifts even to a higher level. Also we will discuss the gifts below in the essay.

As we said at the beginning of this discussion, this is our way of conceptualizing a growth in Sanctifying Grace. As we grow in God's grace, we achieve more of the Theological virtues, the Cardinal virtues, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. When one achieves these virtue and gifts at a high level, with the help of God's grace, he or she is said to be living a life of heroic virtue. The

main thing that is investigated at causes for beatification and canonization is the degree that one has lived a life of heroic virtue.

In summary, at Baptism God infuses into our souls the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, the Cardinal or moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit of Knowledge, Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. The infusion of these virtues and gifts first happens at Baptism.

Sanctifying grace makes humans even greater than the angels: Angels were created naturally superior to man. They have greater intellects and stronger wills than we. The good angels that remained faithful to God when Lucifer rebelled were rewarded by being made sons of God and experiencing the joys of Heaven. However, humans who are sanctified and justified are elevated from the natural to the supernatural level of existence. In this sense they are equal to, even greater than the angels. Why is this so?

The key is the Incarnation. When the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became a man, he came to share in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. When we are baptized we receive the full benefit of Jesus' redemption. When we have the stain of Original Sin washed from our souls by the waters of Baptism, we become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. God living in our souls is what we call grace. It is our participation in God's life. Our baptism makes us adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus, who is both human and divine; he is the Godman. This makes us heirs to Heaven.

Although the angels are created like us in God's image and likeness, and they too are part of his family, they cannot enter into as close a relationship with God as we can. We can become more like God by acquiring more of his life in us, more of his grace by living holy and virtuous lives. When humans become holy enough they achieve union with God, then God assumes their body and soul until they become one with him. Yet unlike eastern mystical religions when the individual finds the center of his being where the god within him lives (i.e., his being is annihilated and he becomes one in being with the universe), the divinized Christian maintains his personality and individuality. In other words, the personality of the divinized Christian is enhanced and affirmed,



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whereas the divinized Hindu or Buddhist is believed to no longer exist as a separate being; his personality simply ceases to exist as he becomes absorbed into the divinity.

Divinization of Humans: The Church Fathers speak of the divinization of human beings. For example, St. Irenaeus said that Jesus “became what we are, so that he might bring us to be what he himself is.” This statement gives rise to the statement that Jesus shared in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. In this same manner, St. Athanasius said that the Word, “became man so that we might be made God.” St. Basil the Great describes the effect of the gift of the Spirit by saying that the Christian is “made God.” And St. Augustine said that Christians are deified by grace. Although what the Fathers said about the divinization of man is true, they were not using the word “God” in precisely the same way one uses it when saying the Holy Trinity is God, which is probably why they said “man is made God”, and not that “he is God.”

God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, became like us in all things but sin. In this sense God is like us for by his Incarnation he possesses a human body and soul. The angels do not enjoy this benefit; this resemblance to God. If man is even greater than the angels, we believe that it is this fact that would make him so. The best example of perfect virtue and holiness is this sinless God-man, Jesus Christ. To the extent we become like him we become godlike, we become divinized. Of course most of us, hopefully, will achieve this status only in Heaven where our souls will be united with glorified bodies much like that of our Risen Savior and the Blessed Mother. Then we will be truly “gods.” But keep in mind that we shall become “gods” only because we will be filled with God's grace, his life within us, not because of any merits of our own, not because we will have been transformed into a divine substance. We will always remain creatures, created substances or beings, but creatures whose nature have been elevated to the supernatural level by the divine indwelling.

Quoting St. Augustine the *Catechism* says of the divinization of man that “the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth, because ‘heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away.’ He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy” (No. 1994).

You might still wonder, what does it mean that humans can become god, that they can be divinized? The closer one achieves union with God, the more godlike he becomes. One must be purified before he can achieve union with God. Our union with God began at our baptism. At that time we became members of his Mystical Body—the Catholic Church—and to share in the life of the Holy Trinity. At that time, we became adopted children of God the Father and sons and daughters of his son Jesus, and as a result members of his family. However, because of the consequences of Original Sin, baptism does not restore us completely to the Original Holiness and Justice possessed by Adam and Eve. This is true because our diminished intellect, weakened wills, and our urge to sin called concupiscence. Just as we must be purified in Purgatory before we can experience union or intimate friendship with God in Heaven, we must be purified before we can achieve a closer union with him in this life as well. To experience union with God, one must

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become holy—to become more like Jesus, our example of perfect holiness and virtue. We can do these things only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world. God gives only in proportion to our ability to receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace.

The holier one becomes the more he becomes like God. This does not mean that he is literally becoming God, but that although he remains a creature, he is becoming more and more integrated into the life of the Trinitarian Family. Another way of putting this is that the holier one becomes, he possesses more and more of God's grace, his sanctifying grace, the grace that makes him holy, the grace that makes him more like God. Grace then is the life of God within us, it is our participation in his life. The more grace that one possesses, the more godlike he becomes. Since God is infinite, there is no limit to the amount of grace that one can possess. The Blessed Mother is full of grace, as holy as a human being can become. All other saints only approximate her holiness, because they started their journey toward union with God and Heaven from a state of Original Sin, which Mary did not possess, because she was immaculately conceived. The amount of grace that one possesses at death will determine his or her capacity for happiness in Heaven. Humans are most godlike when he achieves union with God either in this life or in the next. The more one achieves union with God, the more he shares his divinity with us in the form of grace.

Achieving union with God in this life and for eternity requires that we strive to be perfect as is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). Jesus is our model of perfect holiness and virtue. He is perfect by his nature. Mary was perfect because she was full of God's grace. Countless other saints throughout the ages achieved union with God by following Jesus' example. We too can become closer to perfection by overcoming mortal sin, venial sin, and imperfections with the help of God's grace. Achieving holiness and union with God is sainthood.

Achieving holiness and union with God: God made us to know, love, and serve him in this life so we can be happy with him in Heaven in the next life. We must first know him to love and serve him. The more we know him the more we can do these things. We cannot know God directly because of our fallen natures, which makes it harder to know him. We must spend a lifetime getting to know him better. We get to know him better by utilizing the means provided by Jesus with which to achieve union with God. We get to know God better by:

- Studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings); to acquire knowledge of his teachings
- Receiving the sacraments frequently; the principal means of his grace
- Living virtuous lives; the way to holiness
- Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the way to show our love for him
- Prayer; the way to communicate with him
- Penance; the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others

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Above all, we get to know God better by loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strengths for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves (John 15:12).

The loss and regain of Sanctifying Grace

We lose sanctifying grace by committing a mortal sin, which is the spiritual death of our soul. When one commits a mortal sin, the indwelling Trinity leaves his or her soul. When this happens, the person is spiritually dead. In order for a sin to be mortal it must be a serious matter, one must know that it is a serious matter, and one must act with a free will.

The meaning of sin: According to the *Catechism* “sin "is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God” (1849, 1853). In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. “Mortal sin,” the *Catechism* teaches, “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (1855). Sin offends God, because it hurts others and is a rejection of his love and mercy.

Mortal means death and mortal sin means spiritual death of the soul. It destroys the life of grace within one’s soul. When one deliberately disobeys God’s commandments—does an act contrary to his will—with full knowledge that it is a serious matter and with full consent of the will and not due to any fear or coercion, he or she commits mortal sin; God leaves his or her soul and he or she dies a spiritual death. The person who has violated his or her friendship with God is no longer God's friend. He or she is no longer in good standing in God's family. One who loses his or her place in God’s family loses his or her inheritance of Heaven. He or she is on the road that leads to eternal death and separation from God forever. God simply will not live where he is not wanted and we can't live with him if we do not want to. Like the dead body, which cannot bring itself back to life, the spiritually dead soul in mortal sin can do nothing to rejuvenate itself; only God can give it life once again.

Regaining God's grace and friendship

Because of God's infinite love and mercy, we can readily regain sanctifying grace once it has been lost through mortal sin; he has made it easy to regain his friendship and our place in his family. We can again become his adopted children in good standing by being sorry for our sins, confessing them, having a firm purpose of amendment, and doing penance to pay for the damage caused by them. Like the father of the prodigal son, God is always waiting with open arms to receive his prodigal sons and daughters back into his family (Luke 15:11-32). God dwells in us as long as we remain in his sanctifying grace. We must be in his grace at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can achieve and maintain this holiness only by living lives of faith, hope, and above all love of God and neighbor.

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In summary, the fruit of baptismal grace washes away the stain of Original Sin and all personal sins. God infuses sanctifying grace into baptized persons and they become temples of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells also dwell the Father and the Son. Baptism makes persons sons and daughters of God the Father, brothers and sisters to His Son Jesus, and heirs to Heaven.

Baptism is the sacrament of spiritual regeneration by which a person is incorporated in Christ and made a member of his Mystical Body (the Catholic Church), given grace, and cleansed of original sin. Actual sins and the punishment owed for them are remitted also if the person baptized was guilty of such sins (e.g., in the case of a person baptized after reaching the age of reason). The theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity are given with grace as well as the Cardinal Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The matter is the water and the pouring of water. The form is the words “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

THE ROAD TO HOLINESS

What starts us on the road to living a life of holiness and achieving sainthood? We want to preface the answer to this question with a few comments. The Incarnation did not automatically restore humankind to God's image and likeness. In spite of Original Sin, however, humans still possess the image of God, because unlike the fallen angels who were cast into Hell when they rebelled against God, humans were not totally corrupted when our first parents committed Original Sin. Because humans had lost their innocence and were no longer holy, they were no longer like God; however, they were still basically in God's image, that is, they still had immortal souls, which possessed intellect and free will. However, Original Sin diminished their intellects and weakened their wills, and they were to suffer from the urge to commit actual sin, which is called concupiscence. Moreover, in the fallen state they were subject to suffering, sorrow, and death. Yet God still loved them and considered them redeemable, capable of being freed from the power of Satan and the slavery of sin.

In other words, after the Fall, human beings remained in God's image, still possessing immortal souls with the faculties of intellect and free will (although reduced in capacity because of the effects of Original Sin), but they no longer possessed the likeness of God, for they were no longer holy. As a result, they lost God's friendship (justice). Moreover, they lost their place in the Trinitarian Family; therefore, they were no longer supernatural children of God and no longer possessed the privilege of inheriting eternal happiness.

Now to specifically answer our question, "What starts us on the road to living a life of holiness and achieving sainthood?" We are made friends with him once again only at Baptism (the restoration of God's friendship is logically called justification, because it restores the justice lost by Adam and Eve by their original sin.), for as the *Catechism* says, "The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin" (No. 734). In this regard, Jesus said, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5).



Until his death in 2007, Fr. Jordan Aumann was one of the world's greatest spiritual theologians and retreat masters. His work dispels the common misconception that ascetical and mystical theology is for the select few. He reminds us that "the real purpose of the study of the spiritual life is not to produce scholars but to form holy Christians."

Dead to sin before Baptism: At baptism we died to sin and were given new life in Jesus Christ. In this regard St. Paul states:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

The effects of Baptism: God infused sanctifying grace into our souls at baptism. Sanctifying grace is the life of God within us; it is our sharing in God's life. We become temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity comes to dwell in our souls. Our Baptism restores our image to the likeness of God's image and gives us the privilege of sharing in the inner life of the Holy Trinity; we truly become members of God's family by adoption and by grace. We become adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of his son Jesus Christ, and heirs to Heaven. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his divinity.

The effects of sanctifying grace: If we are to become more intimate with God, that is, if we are to become saints in this life, we must love him for his own sake with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God. Loving God means doing his will, obeying his Commandments. Loving neighbor means putting into practice Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy with respect to our neighbor, that is, to do good works. Doing good works for our neighbor puts into practice Jesus' commandment at the Last Supper to love our neighbor as he has loved us (John 15:12).

Sainthood: We think of sainthood as a status achieved only by persons in Heaven, and that's partly true; however, God created us for union—a close friendship—with him even in this life. Of this desire for union St. Augustine said in the fourth century A.D. “O God you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (Confessions 1, 1).

Loosing Sanctifying Grace: Can one lose the state of sanctifying grace? The answer is yes! We lose sanctifying grace by committing serious sins. Although God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lives in friendship with us from the time of our Baptism, like all friendships, it must be cultivated. We must spend a lifetime developing our friendship with God. The closer our friendship with him, the more he will increasingly make us aware of his presence and the more firm will be our faith in him and his promises, for he will infuse into our souls the Theological and Cardinal virtues. However, we can lose this divine friendship by seriously sinning. This is true because of the consequences of Original Sin.

Actual Grace: In addition to sanctifying grace, we need actual grace to become and remain holy; i.e., in a state of sanctifying grace. Fr. Jordan Aumann, one of the world's greatest mystical theologians and spiritual directors, defines actual grace as "a transient stimulation or movement by which the soul is prompted [by God] to do or receive something relating to justification, sanctification, or salvation" (Spiritual Theology). In other words, actual grace is a special help or inspirations from God to us to avoid sin and to continue in a state of sanctifying grace. It disposes us to receive the infused virtues (the habits of Faith, Hope, and Charity) for the first time or when we have lost them by mortal sin. In the case of mortal sin, actual grace can stimulate repentance for our sins, cause us to fear punishment, and produce in us confidence in God's mercy. Furthermore, actual grace helps us to put the infused virtues into action and if in the state of sanctifying grace helps us perfect the infused virtues and grow in the supernatural life. Moreover, actual grace helps us to overcome mortal sin and thus prevent the loss of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. It does this by strengthening us when being tempted, provides us with an awareness of special dangers, helps us to mortify the passions, and inspires us with good thoughts and holy desires.

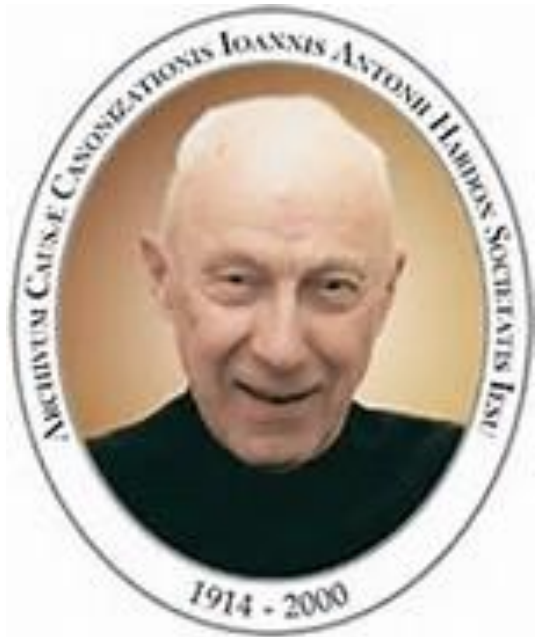
THE MEANING OF SIN

What is sin? According to the *Catechism*, sin “is an offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the eternal law of God” (1849, 1853). St. Augustine said something to the effect that sin is when we do something contrary to God’s will; we say “My will be done, instead of “Thy will be done”. In other words, sin is willfully rejecting good and choosing evil. In judging the degree of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. “Mortal sin”, the *Catechism* teaches, “destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God’s law . . . Venial sin allows charity to subsist, even though it offends and wounds it” (No. 1855).

Mortal Sin: Mortal means death and mortal sin means spiritual death of the soul. It destroys the life of grace within one’s soul. When we deliberately disobey God’s commandments—does an act contrary to his will—with full knowledge that it is a serious matter and with full consent of the will and not due to any fear or coercion, we commit mortal sin; God leaves our souls and we die a spiritual death. When we violate our friendship with God we no longer are God’s friends; we are no longer in good standing in God’s family; we lose our place in his family; we are no longer his adopted children. If we lose our place in God’s family, we will lose our inheritance of Heaven. We are on the road that leads to eternal death and separation from God forever. God simply will not live where he is not wanted and we can’t live with him unless we want to. Like the dead body, which cannot bring itself back to life, the dead soul in mortal sin can do nothing to rejuvenate itself either; only God can give it life once again.

The Restoration of God’s Grace: Can we regain God’s friendship and spiritual life if we should lose it? Fortunately for us we can. Although we can lose God’s friendship and our place in his family by committing mortal sin, we can easily regain his friendship and be reinstated into his family by sorrow for our sins, repentance, and confession. As for the Prodigal son, God is always waiting with open arms to receive his prodigal sons and daughters back into his family. God dwells in us as long as we remain in his sanctifying grace. God must be dwelling in our souls at our deaths to share in his life forever in Heaven. We can achieve and maintain God’s grace only by living lives of faith, hope, and above all love of God and neighbor.

- Some unfortunately believe that they can live sinful lives and repent and convert late in life and make it to Heaven. What about this attitude? Those who live in habitual mortal



Fr. John Hardon was a renowned catechist and retreat master. His *Catholic Catechism* was the standard until the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He served as a consultant for the drafting of that document. He was also spiritual director to Mother Teresa.

sin are on the superhighway to Hell and will find it extremely difficult to get back on the straight and narrow path to Heaven. Fr. John Hardon, one of the world's greatest catechists until his death in 2000 says of habitual mortal sin, "If one serious sin can cause such devastating effects, it is not difficult to imagine the deplorable state of those who live in habitual mortal sin. Eventually the habit of sin, like all habits, becomes like a second nature to the sinner, so that it is very difficult to convert to a life of virtue. Rather, the individual will be characterized by one or more of the capital sins: pride, gluttony, lust, avarice, sloth, envy, anger" (*The Catholic Catechism, Part One: Doctrines of the Faith - VI. The Grace of G*). I believe this is why deathbed conversions are rare. Those who live in habitual mortal sin and vice become what they do and seldom see the need to change.

Venial Sin: Venial sin is a lesser sin that does not loose for us God's sanctifying grace (*venia* means pardon). Venial sin is a sickness of the soul, but not one that kills it. Fr. Hardon says that, "The sinner who commits a mortal sin is like the traveler who turns his back on the goal and begins to travel in the opposite direction. But the person who commits a venial sin merely departs from the straight path without abandoning the journey toward the goal" (*The Catholic Catechism*). He identifies three classes of venial sins:

- Those that by their very nature involve a disorder or deviation, although only a slight one, such as a small lie that does no damage to anyone.
- Those that, because of the smallness of the matter involved, constitute only a light disorder, such as stealing a small amount of money
- Those that lack complete deliberation or full consent of the will in matters that would otherwise be serious sins, such as the taking of God's name in vain.

However, Fr. Hardon tells us that we must "distinguish between venial sins committed out of weakness, surprise, or lack of advertence and deliberation, and those that are committed coldly and with the complete awareness that one thereby displeases God. We can never completely avoid the former, and God, who knows very well the clay of which we are made, readily forgives us these sins of weakness. The only thing that one can do about these faults is to try to diminish their number so far as possible and to avoid discouragement." (*The Catholic Catechism*).

Why venial sins are detrimental to the spiritual life: Fr. Hardon lists four effects of venial sins that are especially detrimental to the spiritual life:

1. It deprives us of many actual graces that God would otherwise have given us. This privation sometimes results in our falling into a temptation that we could have avoided by means of that actual grace of which we were deprived. At other times it may result in the loss of a new advance in the spiritual life. Only in the light of eternity—and then there is no remedy—will we realize what we have lost as a result of deliberate venial sins.

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2. It lessens the fervor of charity and one's generosity in the service of God. This fervor and generosity presuppose a sincere desire for perfection and a constant striving for it, which are totally incompatible with voluntary venial sin, because the latter implies a rejection of the lofty ideal and a deliberate halt in the struggle for greater holiness.
3. It increases the difficulties in the exercise of virtue. This is a result of the two previous effects. Deprived of many actual graces that are necessary to keep us on the path of the good, and weak in fervor and generosity in the service of God, the soul gradually loses more and more of its spiritual energy. Virtue appears to be more difficult, the effort required for growing in holiness becomes more and more demanding, and the experience of past failures disheartens the soul.
4. It predisposes for mortal sin. This is perhaps the worst detrimental effect of venial sin. This is clearly testified in Scripture when it is stated that he who wastes the little he has is gradually stripped bare (Sirach. 19:1). Experience confirms that the ultimate fall of many souls has been started in this way. Little by little the soul has lowered its defenses until the moment arrives in which the enemy, in one furious assault, conquers the city (*The Catholic Catechism*).

Fr. Jordan Aumann says that “Deliberate venial guilt is a disease that slackens the spiritual powers, lowers a man’s resistance to evil, and causes him to deviate from the path that leads to glory. It places obstacles in the way of virtue and reduces fervor for the things of God” (Spiritual Theology).

Other types of human weaknesses: Mortal and venial sins are acts that are intrinsically evil. Even though they may be small matters, venial sins are still by their nature evil acts. There is another class of behaviors due to our human weaknesses called imperfections. These are situations in which one chooses the lesser of two good actions. In other words, either choice is good and the choice made does not cease to be good even though it could have been a better choice. Nevertheless, Fr. Hardon states that “the imperfections are detrimental to the spiritual life and impede the flight of the soul to sanctity (*The Catholic Catechism*). The perfect example is the Blessed Mother. She was not only free from Original and actual sin, but she always made the better of two good choices when given the opportunity. She was able to do this because she was full of God’s grace. Living a life of perfect virtue as did our Blessed Mother requires that we strive to eliminate even imperfections from our lives. Jesus himself said to be perfect as is our Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:48). He would not have said this if it were not possible.

HOW TO ACHIEVE PERFECTION

Achieving perfection seems like an almost impossible task. How can it possible be done? We grow in holiness only with the help of God's grace. As we grow in holiness we are gradually purged of sin and attachments to the things of this world. St. Teresa of Avila tells us we can grow in holiness only to the extent that we can detach ourselves from the things of this world and attach ourselves to the things of Heaven. God gives only in proportion to our ability to receive his gifts. The holier we become the greater receptacle we become for God's infusion of grace.

Detachment is needed to achieve holiness: To be holy requires that we rid ourselves of sin, imperfections, and needless attachments to the things of this world. In other words, if we desire to be holy we must detach ourselves from anything that doesn't lead to God. The objective is to empty ourselves of selfishness, greed, lust, hatred, anger, spiritual laziness, and above all pride so God can fill us with his grace. Moreover, the more we practice the virtues of patience, humility, obedience, and love the holier we will become, and the holier we become the higher we will ascend in our prayer life, and the higher our prayer life the closer we will achieve union—a close friendship—with God.

How can we detach ourselves from the things of this world and keep our eyes on the things of Heaven? St. Teresa of Avila tells us to keep our thoughts constantly on the vanity of all things and to fix them on eternity and heavenly things. Moreover, cultivate an active prayer life, because prayer furthers detachment and detachment furthers prayer. Persons too much attached to the things of this world, those constantly caught up in the affairs of this world, will never find time for prayer or even see the need for it. There is an old saying that goes “Those who are holy pray and those who pray are holy.”

Although we are to try to detach ourselves from the things of this world, it is true that what God has made is good. While it is true that we must become less attached to the things of this world in order to prepare ourselves for the infusion of God's grace, detachment doesn't mean that the things of this world are necessarily bad in themselves; after all, God gave them to us for our welfare and enjoyment. Detachment means not to seek things for themselves, but instead for the love and glory of God and the love and benefit of others. Jesus never became indifferent to the things of



St. Teresa was one of the greatest saints of all time. She was born at Avila in Spain in 1515. She entered the Carmelites and made great progress in the way of perfection and was granted mystical revelations. Wishing to share in the spiritual renewal of the Church of her time, she began to live her religious life more ardently and soon attracted many companions, to whom she was like a mother. She also helped in the reform of the friars, and in this had to endure great trials. She wrote books which are renowned for their depth of doctrine and which showed her own spiritual experiences. She was made a Doctor of the Catholic Church for her spiritual writings and declared a saint for her achievement of union with God. She died at Alba in 1582.

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this world; in fact, it is his divine providence or plan that we embrace his creation by helping him to improve it by our stewardship.

Humility is needed to achieve holiness: Humility is said to be the most important virtue needed to achieve perfection. St. Teresa especially emphasized the cultivation of the virtue of humility, the greatest of all the virtues, because all of the rest of the virtues depend upon humility. The humble person always puts God first, then his neighbor. The opposite of humility is the greatest sin of all, which is pride, for wasn't it pride that led to the downfall of first Lucifer and then Adam and Eve? Isn't it pride that causes most of the evil present in the world today, because proud people believe holiness is a weakness and don't believe they need others. St. Teresa believed that pride militated against holiness and stifled obedience to God.

Holiness isn't a very popular word in our modern society. Some say that it is a sign of weakness. To the contrary, holiness isn't a sign of weakness, but of strength. It's true that many people have come to associate it with weakness, like being a "Miss Goody Two shoes" or a "wimp" or a "sissy," but in fact the opposite is true. Jesus certainly wasn't a "wimp" or a "sissy"; he was as manly and outspoken a person that ever walked the face of the earth, while at the same time being the holiest and most humble person who ever lived. In fact, he was so outspoken that some have accused him of being the most arrogant person who ever lived; all that stuff about being God you know and having the "nerve" to tell others how to live their lives. It takes far more courage to turn one's other cheek as Jesus taught and did than it does to become angry and strike out at someone when provoked. Moreover, who else would have had the courage to come into the world for the sole purpose of suffering and dying for every human being who ever lived?

THE STAGES OF HOLINESS

Catholic spiritual writers over the centuries have identified three stages of spiritual progress or perfection that we must undergo on the ascent to holiness and union with God. The three stages of holiness or perfection are the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way, and the Unitive Way. Each of these, in order, involves becoming progressively more intimate with God, for as *The Catechism* states, “Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ” (No. 2014). We shall briefly look at each of these stages, in turn:

The Purgative Way: The Purgative Way is the stage of spiritual development when one decides that he or she is going to try to lead a life in accordance with the will of God, to obey his Commandments. Father Hardon defines the Purgative Way “As the primary stage of mental prayer, according to the teaching of Sts. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. The soul’s chief concern in this stage of perfection (or mansions as St. Teresa calls the stages of spiritual development) is an awareness of one’s sins, sorrow for the past, and a desire to expiate the offenses against God” (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*). The purgative way is comparable to what St. Teresa calls the first three mansions on the upward climb to spiritual perfection. The principal form of prayer in this stage is verbal prayer, although persons may be becoming novices in mental prayer. To simplify our discussion, we will discuss these types of prayer in another essay.

The Illuminative Way: Father Hardon tells us that the Illuminative Way is an “intermediary stage between purification and union on the path to Christian perfection . . . the main feature of the Illuminative way is an enlightenment of the mind in the ways of God and a clear understanding of his will in one’s state of life” (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*). The person who has reached this stage of perfection in the spiritual life practices both verbal and mental prayer and begins to experience various degrees of contemplation or experiences of union with God.

The Unitive Way: The Unitive Way is the third and final stage of Christian perfection beyond the Purgative and Illuminative Ways. Of this stage Father Hardon says, “Its principal feature is a more or less constant awareness of God’s presence, and a habitual disposition of conformity to the will of God. Although commonly regarded as the last stage in the spiritual life, it is recognized that the three traditional levels of progress in holiness are not chronological. They may be present, in greater or less degree, at any point in a person’s growth in sanctity” (*Modern Catholic*



St. John of the Cross with his good friend, St. Teresa of Avila. St. John of the Cross called spiritual trials “dark nights of the soul,” something he experienced for many years of his life, as did St. Teresa of Avila. In spite of the numerous trials that confronted them, they just kept climbing toward their goal of Heaven. He is considered one of the greatest writers in Spanish and was made a Doctor of the Church for his spiritual writings.

Dictionary). The person who has reached the unitive stage prays ceaselessly by employing all of the forms of prayer, verbal, meditative, and especially contemplation. Contemplative prayer is a form of prayer that God provides for those who are especially holy and enjoy a close friendship with him. We will discuss the types of prayer when we discuss prayer below in this essay. Both verbal and meditative prayer can be the occasion for the infusion of God's grace in contemplation.

Praying without ceasing

St Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How can this be possible? St. Paul's injunction to pray without ceasing does not mean that the person at this stage of spiritual development goes around mumbling vocal prayers all of the time. In fact, persons in the Unitive Way probably say fewer verbal prayers than persons at less developed stages of holiness. Because they are living their lives in full conformance with God's will and have a constant awareness of his presence; they are living in union with God. Because they are in such close union with God, their lives become a ceaseless prayer.

Reaching the summit of holiness in this life: Few of us ever reach the heights of holiness in this life, what St. Teresa called the highest mansion (the seventh) and St. John of the Cross fittingly called the summit of the mountain (Mt. Carmel). The summit is a place where the will of the person achieving this degree of perfection is one with the will of God; he or she has entered into the innermost life of the Trinity. This is what it means to say that we share in the divinity of God. St. Thomas Aquinas told his sister when she asked how she could achieve holiness and union with God that the only reason we don't reach the top is that we don't desire it enough; we don't try hard enough to reach it. When one reaches the summit, he or she has achieved as intimate a relationship or friendship with God as is humanly possible in this world.

Do persons who reach the summit of perfection enjoy the vision of God, the Beatific Vision? The answer is “No!” Because of our sinfulness, we are unworthy, better yet we are incapable of seeing God as he is in all of his glory and majesty; consequently, a veil separates God from us. We cannot see him as he is until we are completely purged of our sinfulness and repaired the damage caused by our sins. Only a few people achieve this level of union with God in this life, and even they don't see him as he is—the Beatific Vision—until they die and are taken to Heaven. The great majority of persons who eventually make it to Heaven aren't purified enough in this life to deserve seeing God at their deaths, so they must undergo a period of purification before he fully reveals himself to them. For those who become holy enough in this life, God can penetrate the veil that separates him from them in contemplative prayer, but he does not fully reveal himself to them because of their wounded nature, no matter how much healed with God's sanctifying grace.

Benefits of achieving union with God in this life: Many associate union with God with various types of mystical experiences, such as ecstasy, rapture, levitation, auras, locutions, visions, stigmata, fragrances, bilocation, apparitions, private revelations, and the like, and so they might be. Each of the preceding listed experiences is associated with a highly intense union with God

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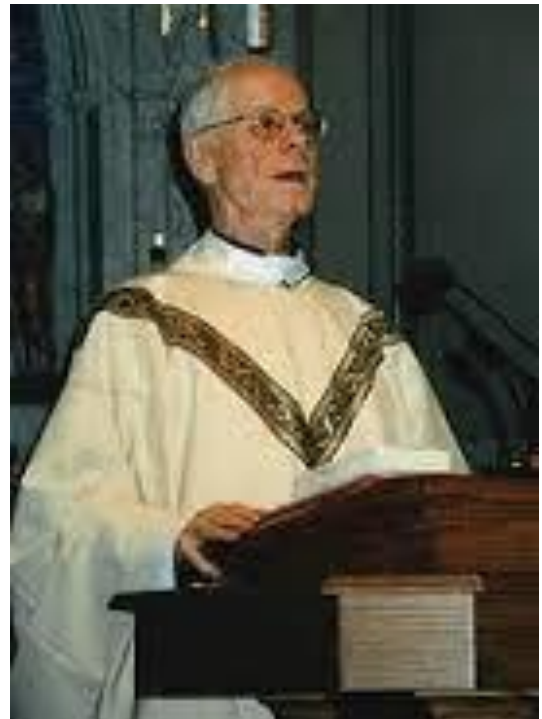
whereby the faculties of the will, intellect, memory, and imagination are absorbed by God. Does this mean that one at this height always has mystical experiences? No! Ordinarily, only saints who possess heroic virtue and lead extraordinarily holy lives experience these extraordinary types of mystical experiences, and many if not most of them don't. For example, one of our greatest modern saints, St Teresa of Lisieux, had very few such experiences of this sort. Nonetheless, all of us are called to holiness in this life and each of us is capable of experiencing a close friendship with God if we become holy enough, enough like Jesus. We can do this only by doing God's will and with the help of his grace, which he offers us freely. Some of the principal benefits of reaching the summit identified by Fr. Thomas Dubay in his book *Fire Within* are as follows:

- Peace and refreshment of mind and soul
- Heroic virtue; the ability to practice virtue in an extraordinary way
- Innocence of evil
- Cessation of inner suffering
- Cessation of imperfections
- Remarkable delight in God's creation
- A constant awareness of God's presence
- All actions are performed for God
- Fullness of joy

The main thing to remember is that these gifts are purely gifts from God; we do not deserve them, but we can cooperate with God's grace to receive them. God offers each of us the grace to lead holy lives; however, we must use our will to make the decision to accept it. We can prepare for the infusion of God's grace by emptying ourselves of vices and sin.

In summary, all of us are called to the summit of holiness, even in this life, not just religious and clergy. A woman can achieve holiness by fulfilling her duties as a wife and mother. A man can achieve holiness by being a good father and husband and providing for his family. A teenager can be holy by obeying his or her parents, being obedient to his or her teachers, and by being kind to his or her classmates. Union with God can be established by performing well the duties that he has placed upon us. Mother Teresa of Calcutta stressed the importance of each of us performing our day-to-day duties well. St. Teresa of Lisieux taught us her "Little Way", which is to do ordinary things for the extraordinary love of God; that is for the love and glory of God and the love and benefit of our neighbor.

Our main goal in life should be to achieve and maintain union with God. To achieve union with



Fr. Thomas DuBay, was a well-known retreat master and world renowned expert in the spiritual life, tells us in his *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of "oughtness" that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings.

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God requires holiness. Jesus is our model for holiness, because he is holy; therefore, being holy means being like Jesus. The closer we become like Jesus, the more like God we become, the closer to the image of God created in our souls. We must establish and maintain God's friendship in this life if we hope to enjoy his friendship for eternity. Jesus calls us all to holiness, to sainthood. By doing so we become his brothers and sisters and adopted sons and daughters of his Father. Being the Father's sons and daughters make us heirs to Heaven.

PRAYER AND HOLINESS

To become a saint one needed to achieve holiness, and achieving holiness means to be like Jesus. By becoming holy one can achieve sainthood, which is union with God in this life and for all eternity. To achieve holiness one needs to do the following: practice the Theological and Cardinal virtues; receive the Sacraments frequently; perform the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; and lead an active life of prayer and penance.

The relationship between prayer and holiness is the focus of this section. The two go together; one cannot exist without the other. Those who are holy pray and those who pray are holy; in fact, prayer is one of the principal means with which to achieve holiness. Through prayer we receive the graces from God to practice the works of mercy and to grow in the virtues. Our objective is to learn to practice one to achieve the other. Through prayer we can achieve union with God. The closer we come into union with God, the more God communicates with us.

Our prayer life reflects the intimacy of our relationship with God just as our conversations with our parents, siblings, and friends reflect the intimacy of our relationships with them. Just as we must go through progressive stages of intimacy with them as our relationships grow, we must go through an increasingly intimate relationship with God.

The Catholic Church has accumulated a vast wealth of knowledge about prayer and holiness over the centuries. Prayer has a systematic structure and we hope to provide you with some of the most important knowledge you need with which to pray well.

Types of prayer

Since holiness brings us into closer union or friendship with God, it's natural that we should desire a more intense relationship with him as we progress in holiness. Prayer is the principal means with which we communicate with God. Peter Kreeft, a noted contemporary Catholic philosopher says that prayer is a relationship with God, it is talking and walking with him (*Prayer: The Great Conversation*). The *Catechism* tells us that “prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God” (No. 2559). I believe that it was St. Teresa of Lisieux who said that prayer is nothing more than a conversation with God.

Most of us think only in terms of one type of prayer—verbal or vocal; however, experts in mystical theology, such as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and many others classify prayer into three types: verbal, meditative, and contemplative. St. Teresa of Avila further divides meditative prayer into ordinary meditative prayer and affective prayer. Moreover, she and others identify a form of prayer intermediary between meditative and contemplative prayer called the prayer of simplicity. Vocal and meditative prayer are also called ascetic prayer, because they involve one's own efforts and contemplative prayer is called mystical prayer, because it comes entirely from God. Although it isn't this simple, verbal prayer has been associated with the Purgative stage of

holiness, meditative prayer with the Illuminative stage, and contemplative prayer with the Unitive stage, all discussed above in this essay. We shall briefly look at each of the types of prayer below, in turn.



Sam Anthony Morello, OCD, is a Carmelite priest, and currently superior at Marylake Monastery near Little Rock, AR, is a world renowned expert in Carmelite spirituality.

Verbal (Vocal) Prayer: First let's look at the type of prayer with which you are most familiar, verbal or vocal prayer. It is the most elementary type of prayer. This is the type of prayer that we associate as a conversation with God, the angels, or the saints, and is formed by words (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*). The *Catechism* tells us, "Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony

of Gethsemani (No. 2701). Verbal prayer has been associated with the Purgative stage of holiness discussed in in the preceding section, but you shall see that the relationship between prayer and holiness is more complicated than that.

Verbal prayers are found in the liturgy and public gatherings and are commonly said in private prayer, both formal and spontaneous prayer. Formal prayers are the ones we learned as a child: the Our Father; Hail Mary; Glory Be; *Memorare*; Hail Holy Queen; Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition, and the Apostle's Creed. Spontaneous prayers are the ones we say in our own words as the need arises.

For verbal prayers to have meaning, we must say them with attention and devotion. Attention engages the intellect and devotion the will. Devotion means from the heart, for devotion has to do with the love we have for the one with whom we are communicating—God. For our prayers to be effective we must think about to whom we are speaking and what we are saying. Moreover, we must mean it. Saying prayers without doing these things is simply repeating mindless or empty words.

Sam Anthony Morello, OCD, a Carmelite priest, says of St. Teresa of Avila in this regard, "The saint wants us to say our prayers well! She asks that we repeat the words with understanding. She wants us to say our prayers attentively. Reciting our vocal prayers well is already mental prayer; there is no distinction between mental and vocal prayer when vocal prayer is truly made one's own (see Way, 24). For Teresa the first lesson in learning to meditate is to say one's vocal prayers with attention and affection." (*Lectio Divina* and the Practice of Teresian Prayer). St. Teresa taught that verbal prayer could lead to contemplative prayer, which as we shall see below is a more intimate union with God. If said devoutly, verbal prayers can cause the mind to begin to reflect on

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the meaning of the truths contained therein, which is the first step in meditative prayer, a higher form of prayer than verbal prayer.

Vocal prayer can be a rich source of truth for meditation or mental prayer if we apply our intellect to being aware whom we are addressing and to think about the meaning of the words we are saying. The Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and other formula prayers are rich in the truths of the Faith. These prayers together with Sacred Scripture are the foundation on which all genuine prayer is built. These sources provide us with the essential truths on which to meditate.

Meditative (Mental) Prayer: You are probably more familiar with this type of prayer than you think. In fact, you probably practice it every day and don't know you are praying. Any time you are trying to understand the proper course of action with respect to the will of God, you are in a sense praying. You could make these prayers more effective by improving the conditions for praying: becoming more aware that God is always and everywhere present; recollect your disposition by minimizing outside distractions and calming the emotions; and by intending that the meditation be a conversation with God. Meditative prayer has been associated with the Illuminative stage of holiness, but verbal prayer plays a role in this stage as well.

The objects of meditative prayer

Fr. Hardon says of meditative prayer that the “the objects of meditation are three: mysteries of faith; a person's better knowledge of what God wants him or her to do; and how God wants to be served by the one meditating” (Modern Catholic Dictionary).

Meditative prayer has three steps with which we must be familiar, which are as follows:

- Use our reason to understand a spiritual truth.
- Examine our lives in light of this truth.
- Apply this truth to our lives.

What does all of this mean in practical terms? In regard to the first, spiritual truths, or mysteries of faith, are found above all in Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and formula prayers, such as the Our Father. Furthermore, the writings of the Church Fathers and saints contain commentary on the truths contained in these sources. Moreover, numerous theologians, historians, and philosophers have written well on the truths of the Faith. And don't forget the *Catechism* of the Catholic Church.

Once the truth is understood, the second step is to ponder its meaning in our lives. This should arouse love of God and neighbor, for the goal of meditative prayer is Christian action; therefore, the third step in meditative prayer should transform our lives in Christ.

Prayer is meaningless if it doesn't motivate one to action with respect to loving God and neighbor. Prayer should lead us to action, it should result in an increase in our love of God and neighbor.

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Loving God means obeying his commandments, doing his will; loving neighbor means putting into practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Doing these things make us more holy and draws us nearer to God.

How to perform meditative prayer

To better help us perform meditative prayer, the *Catechism* states, “The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history, the page on which the ‘today’ of God is written” (No. 2705). In other words, we are praying when we think or meditate on the truths found in these and other sources with respect to what it means for us to do the will of God. Next we shall consider methods of meditative prayer.

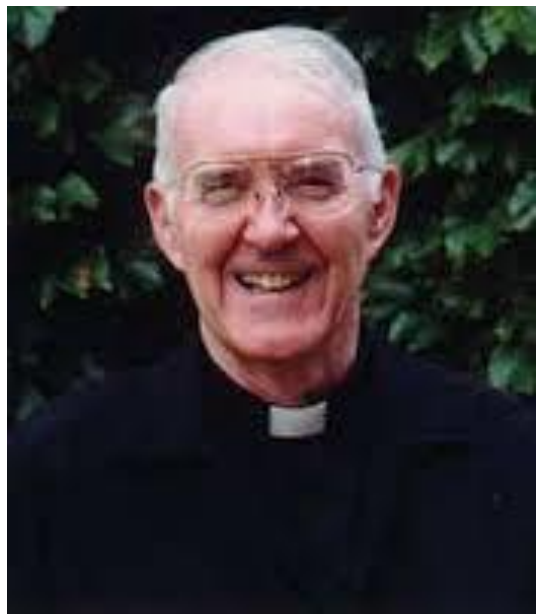
***Lectio Divina*—Praying over the Scriptures:** A method of meditative prayer that you should learn is *Lectio Divina*, which means Divine Reading or praying over the Scriptures or some other religious writings. It was a method of prayer used by the early monks and desert fathers of the Church and refined by St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St Ignatius of Loyola, and other spiritual directors.

Fr. Kenneth Baker describes the method of *Lectio Divina* in the simplest terms in his wonderful book *Inside the Bible*. The method is as follows:

- Select a passage of the Bible.
- Be aware of the presence of God.
- Read and meditate on the passage.
- Respond with acts of faith, hope, and love.

Sam Anthony Morello, OCD, provides us with a more detailed explanation of *Lectio*, which follows:

- *Lectio* itself, which means reading, understood as the careful repetitious recitation of a short text of Scripture
- *Meditatio* or meditation, an effort to fathom the meaning of the text and make it personally relevant to oneself in Christ



Fr. Kenneth Baker, S.J. is a Roman Catholic priest in the Society of Jesus. Besides his pastoral duties as a priest he has served as a professor of theology and President of Seattle University. He has also worked to bring the message of the Catholic Church into more forms of communication media, most notably as editor of magazine the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* which has been called one of the most important English language magazines for priests.

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- *Oratio* which means prayer, taken as a personal response to the text, asking for the grace of the text or moving over it toward union with God
- *Contemplatio* translated contemplation, gazing at length on something.

He says that the idea behind this final element is “that sometimes, by the infused grace of God, one is raised above meditation to a state of seeing or experiencing the text as mystery and reality; one comes into experiential contact with the One behind and beyond the text. It is an exposure to the divine presence, to God’s truth and benevolence.”

Fr. Morello says that the word of God gradually moves from the lips in *lectio* to the mind in *meditatio*, and into the heart in *oratio*. This sets the stage for *contemplatio* or contemplation, which we will discuss below in this essay. By this process one slowly begins to see what the scriptures are saying and to transform one’s life. Morello says of this process “Repetitious reading places the biblical word on the lips. Meditation puts the word in the mind. Prayer takes it to the heart. And then, by the mystical grace of God, contemplation engraves the word in the depths of the spirit. All of this should lead us to action for the love of God and neighbor.

The Bible provides the best book for private prayer: Morello defines *Lectio Divina* as “dwelling on a scriptural text in the divine presence for the sake of radical change in Christ. Yet again, we could say that *lectio* is making one’s own a small selection, phrase, or word of the Bible, in pursuit of greater faith, hope, and charity.” The best way to feed prayer is to ponder the words of Scripture. He says that Carmelites and other Christians make a great mistake in trying to practice the presence of God without sustaining it by the word of God. He says that we need to learn to pray over God’s word. He quotes St. Teresa as saying, “Any sentence or phrase or word of scripture, repeated over and over or recited very carefully, is vocal prayer; and that word or vocal prayer is drawn from her favorite book, the Gospels. In short, Teresa’s teachings on vocal prayer and on the use of the Gospels come together in the practice of praying over the Scriptures. This makes for a most substantial prayer life.” (*Lectio Divina* and the Practice of Teresian Prayer)

Morello tells us that St. Teresa advocated the use of sacred images as well as reading in our prayer life. Images were especially helpful to her because of her difficulty in picturing what she had never seen.

The focus should be on Jesus in meditative prayer: Morello tells that St. Teresa especially emphasizes the importance of focusing on Jesus in meditative prayer. Some of her principles in this area are that: 1) meditation’s best subject and object is the biblical Christ in his life, death, and resurrection; 2) one’s prayer is best habitually (though not exclusively) centered on Christ; 3) the sacred humanity of Christ is the most adequate mediation for initial growth in prayer and the best assurance of and preparation for the gift of contemplation. Jesus is our friend and teacher who will teach us the virtues of love and humility that can draw us all the way into the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. Morello says that “contemplation is a short cut to the perfection of the virtues and to union with God.”

Affective prayer: As we become more experienced in meditative prayer on our road to spiritual progress, your communication with God should get simpler as it did with St. Teresa and the holy Cure D' Ars, St. Jean Baptiste Marie Vianny. This means fewer words and less reflection. At this stage of your spiritual development, your prayers should move more and more from the mind to the heart in your love for God and neighbor. Love is the greatest of all affections, which is why this simplification of prayer is called affective prayer. Meditation enlightens the mind with God's transforming truths and affective prayer—which is a higher development of meditative prayer—draws the will into union with God's will.

The prayer of simplicity: The prayer of simplicity is the highest stage of mental prayer. One reaches this stage through meditation that enlightens the mind of God's truths and transforms the heart into affective prayer that draws the will into closer union with God's will. Thought becomes even simpler than affective prayer during meditation and the will becomes calm. During the prayer of simplicity the soul achieves peace of mind and heart before God.

Those who are fortunate enough to reach the level of the prayer of simplicity have achieved a very close relationship with God; they have become quite holy by using the methods that God has provided them: frequent reception of the sacraments; practicing the Theological and Cardinal virtues; performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; doing penance for one's own sins and the sins of others; and prayer. Up until now much of the effort has been ours (of course with God's grace), however, now it is entirely up to God. At this stage, God, if he chooses, can penetrate the veil that separates us from him in contemplative prayer.

How to perform contemplative (mystical) prayer

Many associate contemplative or mystical prayer with various types of mystical experiences, such as ecstasy, rapture, levitation, auras, locutions, visions, stigmata, fragrances, bilocation, apparitions, private revelations, and the like, and so they might be. Each of the preceding listed experiences is associated with a highly intense union with God; the faculties of the will, intellect, memory, and imagination are absorbed by God during infused contemplation. Ordinarily, only saints who possess heroic virtue and lead extraordinarily holy lives experience these extraordinary types of mystical experiences. Contemplative prayer is closely associated with the Unitive stage of holiness.

Nonetheless, each of us is capable of experiencing more ordinary contemplation if we become holy enough, enough like Jesus. To be holy our will must be in full conformance with the will of God; we must obey his commandments, we must do his will in all things. The more one brings his or her will into conformance with God's will, the holier he or she becomes. One achieves holiness only by practicing the Theological and Cardinal virtues routinely; receiving the Sacraments frequently; performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy regularly; and leading an active life of prayer and penance.

Contemplation penetrates the veil that separates us from God: Because of our sinfulness, we are unworthy; better yet, we are incapable of seeing God as he is in all of his glory and majesty; consequently, a veil separates God from us. We cannot see him as he is until we are completely cleansed in Purgatory of our sinfulness and repaired the damage caused by our sins. Only a few people achieve this level of union with God in this life, and even they don't see him as he is—the Beatific Vision—until they die and are taken to Heaven. The great majority of persons who make it to Heaven aren't purified enough in this life to deserve seeing God at their deaths, so they must undergo a period of purification before he fully reveals himself to them. For those who become holy enough in this life, God can penetrate the veil that separates him from them in ordinary or extraordinary contemplative prayer.

We know of no better definition of contemplative prayer than the one of St. Teresa of Avila that is quoted in the *Catechism*, which states: “Contemplative prayer . . . in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us” (No. 2709).

Benefits of contemplative prayer: Very few of us will get close enough to God in this life to experience extraordinary mystical contemplation: locutions, apparitions, and the like. However, each of us is fully capable of receiving ordinary contemplation; a constant awareness of God's presence and the like. Below are listed some of the principal ordinary benefits of reaching the summit of holiness discussed in Fr. Dubay's *the Fire Within*:

- Peace and refreshment of mind and soul
- Heroic virtue; the ability to practice virtue in an extraordinary way
- Innocence of evil
- Cessation of inner suffering
- Cessation of imperfections
- Remarkable delight in God's creation
- A constant awareness of God's presence
- All actions are performed for God
- Fullness of joy

The main thing to remember is that these are purely gifts from God; we do not deserve them, but we can cooperate with God's grace to receive them. God offers each of us the grace to lead holy lives; however, we must use our will to make the decision to accept his grace. We can prepare for the infusion of God's grace only by emptying ourselves of vices and sin. Persons who are striving to be holy will develop an intellectual awareness of his presence, and the more holy they become, the more God penetrates the veil that separates them from him through their senses of sight, hearing, and smell and not just their minds.

God always initiates contemplation: One can prepare oneself for the intimacy of contemplation, or as St. Teresa says seek him “whom my soul loves” by leading a holy life, but the union always comes from God's initiation, not ours. There is nothing that we can do to bring union

about, except to lead good and holy lives, for union is a gratuitous or free gift from God. Ordinarily one must make a mental effort by vocal or meditative prayer to be aware of God's presence. In contemplation God initiates one's awareness of his presence. The holier one becomes, the closer one achieves union with God, and the more one becomes aware of God's presence in his or her life.

Love for God should be our motive for union with him: It is proper to seek a close relationship with God, but it should be for the love of God and not for any possible mystical experiences that we might receive or any other benefits we might receive. It is a violation of the virtue of humility to desire or seek extraordinary mystical experiences—consolations” as St. Teresa called them—for it would be a submission to the sin of pride to do so. One who seeks union with God for consolations is more motivated by pride than love. God can allow the veil between himself and us to be penetrated at any time, but only when he chooses and under his conditions. We should practice patience and humility as we leave it to God to reveal himself or console us when, where, and how he chooses. The principal condition is that we lead holy lives, something that St. Thomas Aquinas says that we can do if we desire it.

Don't be too intellectual in your prayer life: St. Teresa advises us in her *Life of St. Teresa of Jesus* not to be too intellectual about our prayer life. She tells us not to “tire the intellect, but just to speak with and delight in Him and not wear ourselves out in composing syllogisms. Such acts, she assures us, contain a great amount of sustenance (Morello). In this sense she leads us to “simply look at him who looks at us: I'm not asking that you draw out a lot of concepts or make long and subtle reflections with your intellect. I'm not asking you to do anything more than look at Him” (Morello). The holy Cure D' Ars, St. Jean Baptiste Marie Vianny, once was asked why he sat for long hours before the Blessed Sacrament saying nothing, and he said something to the effect that he and the Lord simply lovingly gazed at one another. These were truly close friendships with God.

God always hears and answers our prayers

God always listens to our prayers and answers them. We must learn to listen to him for he speaks to us in many different ways. Among the ways God can speak to us are: Holy Scripture; writings of the Church Fathers; the lives and writings of the saints; sermons; history; the book of nature; theologians, spiritual directors and confessors; literary writers; sacred music; art, especially sacred art; teachers; parents; friends; relatives; and others. All of these sources are capable of providing us with the truths necessary to transform our lives in Christ.

Like any loving father, God wants to give his children good things, and he has the power to do so. He can do this because he is all-knowing and knows what we need; he is all-powerful and can give us anything he desires. He is so all-knowing and all-powerful that he accounted for all of our prayers from the very beginning of time. He knew what we would ask for and what we would need

from the beginning, because he lives in the eternal present; he has no beginning or end; he is as he told Moses in the burning bush, I AM WHO AM.

Have faith and be confident that God will answer all of your prayers, for as the *Catechism* says “Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us filial boldness: ‘Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will.’ [Mk 11:24 .] Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: ‘all things are possible to him who believes.’ [Mk 9:23 ; cf. Mt 21:22 .] Jesus is as saddened by the ‘lack of faith’ of his own neighbors and the ‘little faith’ of his own disciples [Cf. Mk 6:6 ; Mt 8:26 .] as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman. [Cf. Mt 8:10; Mt 15:28.]” (No. 2610). Below are important passages from the Bible that illustrate our point.

- **Matthew 21:18** “In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, ‘May no fruit ever come from you again!’ And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it they marveled, saying, ‘How did the fig tree wither at once?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea,” it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”
- **John 14:12** “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”
- **John 16:23** “In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”
- **Luke 11:5** “And he said to them, ‘Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’”

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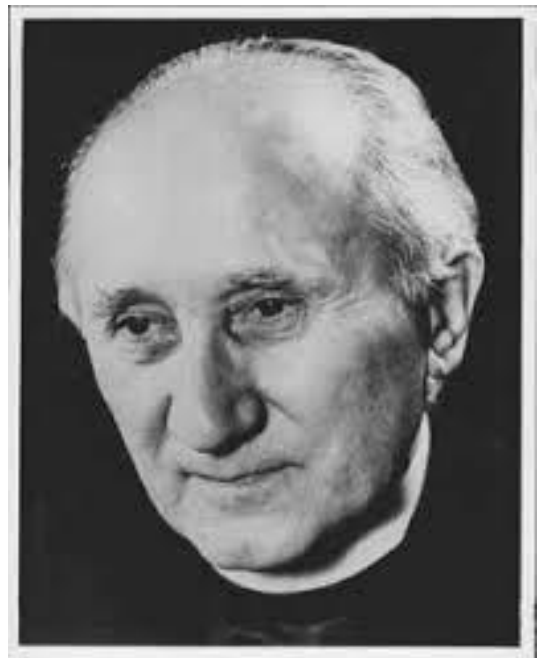
There are conditions that determine how God answers our prayers. For example, he is more inclined to give us what we ask for if we are in the state of sanctifying grace and trying to grow in holiness; if our requests are for the genuine good of ourselves or for others; and if we have complete trust that God will give us what we have asked for. Most important of all, we should never forget to thank God for answering our prayers. Did not Jesus ask “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” when only one leper returned to thank him for his healing (Luke 17:11-18).

Although God is a loving Father who desires to give his children gifts, he will give them to you in his own time. Moreover, he will never give you something that will harm you, only that which will benefit you, especially that which benefits your eternal soul.

Some Difficulties Associated with Praying

Even if one tries hard, the path to the summit of holiness is difficult to traverse. Achieving holiness and an intense prayer life isn't easy. Nothing that is worthwhile is easy to obtain. Fr. Romano Guardini, said to be one of the most important figures in Catholic intellectual life in the twentieth century, tells us in his book *The Art of Praying: The Principles and Methods of Christian Prayer*, that we have a natural instinct against praying; that prayer is difficult for us to do. We must constantly struggle against our own sinful natures as well as the sin and temptation of the world. The glamour of evil is hard to resist. Even when we are making great progress in the achievement of holiness and an intense prayer life, many trials will come our way. One of the greatest difficulties that people encounter on their ascent of the mountain of holiness is aridity or dryness.

Spiritual dryness or aridity: Have you ever experienced an inability to pray or to think about spiritual matters? Or have you ever found it difficult to concentrate on prayer or spiritual matters and are easily distracted? Or have you ever been lukewarm in your religious life and experienced a lack of emotion in spiritual matters? Chances are you have. If these conditions are not the result of sloth (spiritual laziness), they are conditions of what writers on spiritual matters call dryness or aridity. St. John of the Cross called these trials “dark nights of the soul,” something he experienced for many years of his life, as did St. Teresa of Avila. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said she too experienced long periods when she felt that God had



Fr. Guardini's books were often powerful studies of traditional themes in the light of present-day challenges or examinations of current problems as approached from the Christian, and especially Catholic, tradition. He had a lot influence on future popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

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abandoned her. In spite of the numerous trials that confronted them, they just kept climbing, with God's help of course.

Why do we experience these periods of dryness, even when we try hard to overcome them? If we experience spiritual dryness when we are trying to be holy and leading an active prayer life, it is God's way of testing us. Moreover, he is telling us that we are in need of further purification. St. Teresa tells us that we can make progress in our spiritual lives and union with God only by overcoming trials. So if you encounter trials along the way, such as dryness, do as St. John and St. Teresa did, and all other saints over the ages did as well, just keep the Faith and keep on climbing.

Always keep in mind—that love of God, or of anyone else for that matter—isn't an emotional thing, but a decision to obey his commandments, to do his will. Jesus didn't promise us an emotional high if we love him. He said if you love me, obey my commandments (John 14:15). The less one receives consolations and revelations on the ascent to the summit, the greater will be one's reward when he or she gets there.

When to Pray

The hustle and bustle of modern living makes it is hard to find time to pray. As Father Moran repeatedly reminds us, we race rather than pace ourselves through the day. We are so busy that we can't find time for God. How then can we follow St. Paul's admonition to "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? Does this mean that we must go around all the time saying prayers? Of course not! It does mean that we should develop a constant awareness of God's presence. This can be accomplished only to the extent that one becomes holy, to be like Jesus. The holier that one becomes, the more he or she will be aware of God's presence. Awareness of God's presence is a form of communication with him, a form of prayer.

Naturally, one who is aware of God's presence will want to talk to him as much as possible. At times this means using verbal prayer and at others mental prayer. At a minimum one should say morning and evening prayers and remember him during the day with short prayers, such as "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner (or us sinners)," or one of hundreds of others. Furthermore, practice meditation as we read the Bible or say the Rosary daily. Moreover, pray before making decisions, especially big decisions.

We can make a prayer of a lot of regular daily activities. For example, from time to time when we are studying, reflect on the deeper meaning of the subjects that we are studying. There is hardly a subject that we take in school that doesn't have a deeper spiritual meaning, such as history, literature, music, and art, even mathematics and science courses. Furthermore, we can meditate on the things of God while we recreate during hiking, running, walking and the like. Moreover, try meditating when we are on your part-time job as we perform services or create things for others. There is no honest work that can't be performed for the benefit of others and the glory of God. What's more, what better time to pray than when we are performing the spiritual and

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corporal works of mercy for the love of God and neighbor. Perhaps St. Paul had such activities in mind when he urged us to pray ceaselessly (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Moreover, he meant that we should have a disposition that makes us ready to do God's will at all times.

Preparation for Prayer

Before we pray we should properly prepare ourselves. Much has been written about how to pray by spiritual writers over the centuries, but in order to communicate with God we must be aware of his presence and composed or recollected at a minimum. We simply can't carry on a conversation with God if we are distracted by what is going on around us or have our minds elsewhere. To pray we must learn to free ourselves from attractions or distractions from without and turmoil from within. This calming of the self is called composure or recollection. The person who is distracted by what is going on around himself or herself or is daydreaming is not aware of God's presence. Only the composed person can be fully aware of what is going on around himself; only he is wide-awake, is present, and is ready to communicate with God. As we discussed in our essay on the sacraments, composure is not easy to achieve and maintain because of the attractions in our society and the inner turmoil that modern living causes in us. As discussed there, one must diligently practice achieving this state of mind, body, and spirit. While praying try to be aware of God's presence and pay careful attention to what you are saying or thinking and mean what we say.

Beware of counterfeit spirituality

God has given us an innate or inborn need for religion and spirituality. However, today we live in a world in which people have become separated from God. This isn't hard to understand in a world where science seems to explain the causes of everything, where technology makes life easier or safer (or more dangerous), where people live in large impersonal cities, where families, neighborhoods, and communities have become fragmented, and where daily life has become a rat-race. Sometimes the conditions listed above are called the "loss of community." In such a world it is easy to forget who God is or even to forget that he exists. People who become separated from God lose their identity; they don't know who they are, why they exist, or what their destiny is. They come to believe that they are helpless before the impersonal forces that surround them. In such conditions they lose hope in anything. Without Jesus all is lost; life is truly one of darkness and despair. Only he is the light that can penetrate and dispel the darkness that enshrouds the world.

Because of the unfulfilled hunger for God that so many experience in our society, many are vulnerable to counterfeit or false spirituality, and there is plenty of it out there to seduce them. Divination such as fortune telling, astrology, numerology, reading tea leaves, Tarot cards, and I Ching are various methods by which people attempt to foretell and control the future. Channeling, Crystals, Ouija Boards and Spiritualism are methods they employ to contact the spirit world

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beyond. A few practice Wicca, goddess worship, Satanism, and Scientology. Some of these are cults and others New Age spirituality.

Many of these counterfeit forms of spirituality fit in neatly with today's emphasis on the self and the attempt to escape suffering and sorrow. Certain techniques are offered to help men and women find the god within themselves, to realize the potential of their personality, to free themselves of all afflictions, or to find peace of mind and heart. Millions of Americans are attracted by cults and New Age spirituality because of their unfulfilled hunger for God.

Many so-called prayer experts, often calling themselves spiritual directors, are competing with one another for our attention, each claiming to have the correct prayer methods and techniques and way to God. The great St. Teresa of Avila taught us that prayer is communication with God, not a method or technique, and that the starting point of prayer life is not the method of prayer, but the continuing effort to rid oneself of sin, imperfections, and needless attachments.

Unfortunately, many of these spiritual directors are Catholics who claim that their methods or techniques are in the authentic tradition of the Catholic Church. Beware because many of them offer brands of spirituality that are the opposite of authentic Catholic spirituality, the genuine spirituality of St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. John of the Cross, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Frances de Sales, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Lisieux, and of course, St. Teresa of Avila. These types of counterfeit spirituality can lead you away from God, rather than toward him.

The Christian ideal is that an intense prayer life should bring one closer to God. But union with God is attained only by combining prayer with holiness. To be holy is to be like Jesus. Holiness is achieved not only with prayer, but also by doing penance, a frequent reception of the Sacraments, a cultivation of the virtues, and by performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. There are counterfeit versions of prayer activities that can be dangerous to our faith. Be cautious of certain varieties of the following:

- Meditation exercises
- Imagination prayer exercises
- Prayer services

There are right ways to perform these prayer activities, ways that are in the authentic spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church, the tradition of St. Teresa of Avila and the other saints mentioned a few paragraphs above. Then there are wrong ways to practice them, such as various New Age varieties of spirituality. We discuss these methods in the section of this website *Catechism: Prayer*.

Imagination prayer exercises: One prayer activity that is potentially dangerous is imagination prayer exercises. Although this activity could be practiced alone, it can be performed in a group as well. If it is a group, the usual group configuration is a circle. The facilitator begins a recording of some sort of mystical music while asking the participants to close their eyes and begin

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breathing exercises. They are instructed to breathe normally and become conscious of their breathing. When the setting is right, they are told to mentally place themselves in some setting in time and place. One common meditation is to imagine that Jesus is coming toward you. You are to greet him and carry on a conversation with him in which you tell Jesus about yourself, your hopes and fears and so forth. At intervals in the conversation, you are told to listen for Jesus' answers. When the conversation is over, you are told to imagine that Jesus is walking away from you, he stops, turns around and waves to you, then disappears. Then you are instructed to remain in this meditative state for a few minutes afterwards.

On the surface there appears to be nothing wrong with what we have described. I don't think that the use of the imagination in prayer is a bad thing as long as the things imagined really happened. For example, it is all right to imagine that you are present at some biblical event or scene, such as at the Crucifixion, but I think that problems can occur when one tries to manipulate or control the events imagined. Since Jesus is always and everywhere present, why can't one directly communicate with him? Why create all of this imaginary nonsense? All too often those who use this technique are teaching others to fantasize, to live in a make-believe world, rather than to live in reality.

The worst deficiency with this prayer technique is that it can play on your pride or vanity. If facilitators of this prayer technique are asking us to force contemplation when you listen for Jesus' answers to your questions and comments to your concerns, this is causing you to be prideful. If this is true, they are trying to get you to evoke from God a mystical experience of some sort.

As St. Therese of Lisieux has told us, authentic prayer is a conversation with God, and he always answers our prayers, but in a manner he chooses. It is proper to seek a close relationship with God, but it should be for the love of God and not for any possible mystical experiences that one might receive. St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, two of the greatest mystics of all time, taught that it is a violation of the virtue of humility to desire or try or seek mystical experiences, for it would be a submission to the sin of pride to do so. One who seeks mystical experiences, and direct answers from God in a mystical experience, is more motivated by pride than love. God can allow the veil between himself and us to be penetrated at any time, but only when he chooses and under his conditions. We should practice patience and humility as we leave it to God to reveal himself or console us when, where, and how he chooses. The principal condition is that we lead holy lives, something that St. Thomas Aquinas says that we can do if we desire it and let God take care of the rest.

Meditative exercises: As we have studied above in this essay, genuine meditative prayer is a wonderful method of prayer, but the form that is often recommended is a counterfeit variety that is borrowed from eastern religious spirituality. I especially recall seeing a picture in a religious education book of a young boy sitting in front of a Bible with his hands folded, eyes closed, and in a prayerful posture. That seemed harmless enough, even commendable, until I read what he was doing. He wasn't engaged in an authentic meditation on the Scriptures he had just read, he was repeating a mantra in the guise of some form of the Jesus prayer. The Jesus prayer in its various

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forms is a wonderful prayer if said appropriately. One of the best known versions is “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me a sinner.”

The recommended technique of saying this prayer as a mantra is to say “Jesus” while breathing in and “have mercy on me,” or some other phrase while breathing out. For those unfamiliar with eastern or “New Age” meditative prayer techniques, a mantra is a word that is repeated in order to achieve a self-induced trance-like altered state of consciousness while sitting in some position with eyes closed or focused on some object. The mantra is repeated for ten to twenty minutes. To better understand how eastern or New Age meditative techniques work, I shall briefly describe eastern or “New Age” spirituality.

Eastern religions and the “New Age” are Monistic; they claim that all is one. This means that all beings are of the same substance as the Great Essence, the One, the Oversoul, or whatever God is called. The Creator and the created are the same, which is Pantheism. This means that unlike the Christian teaching that man is created in the image and likeness of God, man is a god. Saints such as St. Teresa have achieved holiness to a degree that they are as close as one can become in this life to being like God. Only in Heaven can we see God as he is—the Beatific Vision—and achieve the full union. Nonetheless, man never becomes a god. The objective of New Age spirituality is to discover the god within, not the indwelling Holy Trinity. New Agers employ many different types of techniques to find this god, such as the martial arts, hallucinogenic drugs, Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, dancing, exercises of various sorts, and other meditative techniques borrowed from Hinduism, Buddhism, or other eastern religions.

The mantra is an eastern meditative device that facilitates the discovery of the god within. The mantra is slowly repeated as the person breathes in and out. The objective of repeating the mantra is to rid oneself of an awareness of all surrounding distractions and thoughts. The mantra is a device to help the meditator focus on the self. Those fortunate enough to reach the center of one’s being where the god within resides by repeating the mantra achieve peace, which is an absence of pain, suffering, and sorrow. The few who achieve this oneness with the god within are absorbed into the Great Essence and vanish into nothingness, the state of Nirvana in Hindu parlance. This is the complete annihilation of the human personality. Those who don’t achieve Nirvana during this life are reincarnated into another human being (at least in the New Age version) after death to try again, and again, and again if necessary.

The “New Age” notion of spirituality has nothing in common with genuine Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality is associated with holiness, being more like Jesus and achieving union with God the Father in this life and for eternity. God the Father is a personal God who loves each of us and affirms our personality, rather than an impersonal god who annihilates us and absorbs us into nothingness.

If the mantra in the form of the Jesus prayer was simply a device to help one achieve composure or with which to recollect for genuine prayer experiences, we would have little or no objection to this form of prayer. For one to communicate with God one must be aware of his presence and composed

or recollected at a minimum. One simply can't carry on a conversation with God if he is distracted by what is going on around him or has his mind elsewhere. To pray one must learn to free oneself from attractions or distractions from without and turmoil from within. This calming of the self is called composure or recollection. The person who is distracted by what is going on around himself or is daydreaming is not aware of God's presence. Only the composed person can be fully aware of what is going on around himself; only he is wide-awake, is present, and is ready to communicate with God. Composure is not easy to achieve and maintain because of the attractions in our society and the inner turmoil that modern living causes in us. One must diligently practice achieving this state of mind, body, and spirit. Can the use of a mantra help one accomplish this?

We have grave doubts that a technique designed for one tradition and purpose can be effectively converted for use for another. One text that I have examined says that the purpose of the Jesus prayer is to empty the mind of distracting thoughts to better concentrate on Jesus, in other words to achieve composure. But the instructions given to the students say nothing about meditation on the life of Jesus or any other thoughts after composure is achieved. The prayer session is abruptly ended after the students have repeated the Jesus prayer for several minutes. There is no mention of reflection on any of the mysteries of Jesus' life; no mention of possible inspiration from the Holy Spirit during meditation; no mention of becoming aware of God's loving presence. The use of the Jesus prayer as a mantra is nothing but mindless repetition. The student can achieve a trance-like state just as easily repeating the word OM, a mantra used in eastern meditation, as the word Jesus.

I believe that one of the dangers of using meditative techniques like the one discussed above is that they can predispose young people to delve into New Age and other occult religions. This is especially true since most of the religious education programs that employ these techniques are very weak on doctrine. Furthermore, young people in a trance-like state are subject to hallucinations, delusions, and other abnormal psychological phenomena. Moreover, when their minds are emptied they can become easy prey for evil spirits.

Prayer services: It appears to us that in some religious education programs the prayer service has replaced classroom instruction. Prayer is of course vital to learning and spiritual growth, but young people must be instructed in the Faith, including prayer and holiness, before they can effectively practice it. We have raised an entire generation of Catholics without a knowledge of the Faith, because they exclusively participated in "New Age" type prayer services and humanistic encounter groups rather than learning the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Our experience with modern prayer services are as follows: A "prayerspace" or "quieting center" is selected in the classroom or workshop area in which to do "godspeak" as prayers are referred to. In the center of the area is placed a table or cloth on the floor on which is placed a candle, a Bible, and/or some other religious items. Each of the participants is given a copy of the prayer service and some object that symbolizes the theme of the prayer service; it could be a rock, a mirror, a photograph, or another of dozens of possibilities. Then the participants are asked to sit or stand in a circle in the prayerspace. The service begins with a prayer, a Scripture reading

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accompanied by various rituals. While the participants sit in a “prayerspace” doing “godspeak” the prayer leader chants some sort of “prayers” with some type of mystical music shimmering in the background. Then a period is allowed for reflection, followed by a concluding a prayer.

Much of what I describe above about prayer services seems harmless enough, even beneficial; but, if the experience leaves feeling uneasy rather than peaceful and joyous, be cautious! Many of the prayer services that we have read about employ “New Age” spirituality techniques that are dangerous to one’s faith.

The problem is compounded by the fact that all too often the prayer activities described above are accompanied by the employment of humanistic encounter group psychological methods that are destructive to the personalities of young people and adults alike. Attempts are made to get the participants to bare his or her soul to a small group. The purpose is to strip them down to the real self, minus defenses etc. The goal is to help them realize the potential of their personalities or to change them in some way, and this can’t be done as long as they are holding back or have hang-ups. What these “facilitators” are doing is messing with people’s minds.

I believe that most people who facilitate such prayer and small group activities among young people are well meaning and have good intentions, but you have no doubt heard the old saying about the road to Hell being paved with good intentions. Although some prayer services designed for young people might be beneficial to your spiritual development, we are simply urging you to be careful. Why dabble in forms of counterfeit spirituality that at worst can lead you into cults or “New Age” spirituality or cause you to lose your faith or at the least are worthless? If prayer is done for the purpose of self-improvement, self-realization, relaxation, or to discover the god within, and not as a help to achieving holiness, beware! We have an authentic Catholic spirituality with a 2,000 year tradition behind it that has proven time and again to help people achieve holiness and union with God—the authentic prayer tradition of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross.

THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE HOLINESS AND UNION WITH GOD

Now that we have found out what holiness is and the stages of development in holiness, how do we go about achieving holiness and union with God? God made us to know, love, and serve him in this life so we can be happy with him in Heaven in the next life. We must first know him to love and serve him. The more we know him the more we can do these things. We cannot know God directly because of our fallen nature, which makes it harder to know him. We must spend a lifetime getting to know him better. We get to know him better by utilizing the means provided by Jesus with which to achieve union with God. We get to know God better by:

- Studying and meditating on our Faith (his teachings)
- Receiving the sacraments frequently; the principal means of his grace
- Living virtuous lives; the way to holiness
- Practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; the way to show our love for him
- Prayer; the way to communicate with him
- Penance; the way to make satisfaction for our sins and the sins of others

We will discuss all of these ways to achieve holiness as the essay progresses. Above all, we get to know God better by loving him with our whole hearts, minds, souls, and strengths for his own sake and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Virtues or good habits

To achieve union with God in this life and to be with him in Heaven forever we must lead virtuous lives. How does living virtuous lives contribute to achieving holiness and union with God? Living virtuous lives is the way to achieve holiness. Only Jesus lived a life of perfect virtue and holiness and he is the standard by which we should observe when trying to be perfect as is his heavenly Father.

What are virtues? Virtues are good habits whereas vices are bad habits. Habit means the ease, readiness, satisfaction, and effectiveness with which human actions are performed. Virtues reside in the faculties of the mind and will and may be acquired by personal effort or infused by God. Virtue = Good Habits (either acquired by repetition or infused)

Natural and infused virtues: There are two types of virtues: natural and infused. Natural virtues are good habits that we acquire by repetition. Even persons without God's grace can live virtuous lives at the natural level. Infused virtues are good habits infused in our souls by God to “dispose us to act in accordance to the dictates of reason enlightened by faith.” Their possession enables persons to live virtuous lives at the supernatural level. Fr Jordan Aumann says that their purpose is “to supernaturalize the faculties [of intellect and will] by elevating them to the order of grace and making them capable of performing supernatural acts. Without them, or without the

actual grace that substitutes for them (as in the case of the sinner before justification), it would be impossible for us to perform a supernatural act” (*Spiritual Theology*).

The Theological Virtues: Among the infused virtues are the Theological Virtues. God infuses theological virtues directly into the soul. Their immediate object is God. We first receive them at Baptism. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. Their possession gives a person immediate union with God. “Faith enables us to know God as First Truth; hope makes us desire him as the Supreme Good for us; charity unites us to him by the love of friendship, so far as he is infinite Goodness.” Another way at looking at the Theological Virtues follows:

- Faith is the supernatural virtue by which we believe all the truths, which God has revealed.
- Hope is the supernatural virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us Heaven in the life to come and will provide in this life the means with which to reach Heaven.
- Charity is the supernatural virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake and our neighbor as ourselves, even as he has loved us.

Although the three Theological Virtues are interrelated, they are separate virtues, because as Fr. Aumann says “faith can exist without hope and charity (as in one who commits a mortal sin of despair without losing his faith); charity will perdure [endure] eternally in heaven, separate from faith and hope, which will have disappeared (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8); and finally, in this life faith and hope can subsist without charity, as always happens when one commits a mortal sin not directly opposed to faith or hope.” Faith is considered the first of the virtues. In order of origin, faith is the first theological virtue that we experience, then hope, followed by charity. We must first have faith because it is the foundation of hope and both of these are required to have charity.

Why love is considered the most perfect of the virtues: St. Paul tells us that the most perfect and the “greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13: 13), because “it unites us most intimately with God and is the only one of the three that perdures [continues] in eternity.” Fr. Aumann tells us that charity is “the measure of supernatural perfection so that one who has attained the perfection of the love of God and of neighbor can be called perfect in the truest sense of the word.” Moreover, he says, “Charity establishes the mutual love of friendship between God and ourselves,” it unites us to God. Moreover, it involves love of neighbor as we love ourselves. St. John tells us that God is love (John 4:8); therefore, when he dwells in our souls, when we love, it is God loving through us.

Why is love the greatest of the virtues? Love is the greatest of the virtues, because the other virtues depend upon love. St. Paul says of love (charity, agape):

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 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. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (Corinthians13).

The Moral Virtues: The Theological Virtues and moral virtues are first infused into our souls at Baptism. The Moral Virtues can be either infused by God or acquired by repetition. As was just said, the moral virtues are first infused into our souls at Baptism. However, they can also be acquired by repetition. Whereas the infused Theological Virtues have as their object God, the natural or acquired moral virtues have as their object human activities that lead to God. They are acquired virtues, because they develop as the result of human effort and repetition. They are learned habits that dispose the faculties (intellect and free will) of man to follow the dictate of reason. What then are the infused Moral Virtues? They have been defined as “habits that dispose the faculties of man to follow the dictate of reason illumined by faith in relation to the means that lead to the supernatural end.”

The Cardinal Virtues: Some virtues are the basis for all of the other virtues; all other virtues flow from them. They are called the cardinal Virtues. The Cardinal Virtues are the main categories of the Moral Virtues. They are Prudence; Justice; Temperance; and Fortitude. Cardinal derives from the Latin *cardo*, which means hinge. By cardinal is meant they are primary to human conduct and other virtues flow from them or hinge on them. To repeat, the Moral Virtues can be either learned or infused.

- **Prudence:** Prudence is the virtue of the mind that enables one to decide what is the right thing to do in a given situation. Complementary virtues are good counsel, from which one can profit from the advice of others; common sense, which judges things in accordance with ordinary rules of conduct; and good judgment.
- **Justice:** Justice is the virtue that constantly disposes one to give everyone, including God, his or her due. It involves giving someone what they deserve; what they have coming. Complementary virtues are obedience, which means to obey those in rightful authority; truthfulness, which means to tell things as they really are; gratitude for benefits received; zeal to protect from evil; restitution to repair injuries; and religion with which to worship God. Religion is giving God his due, what he deserves.
- **Temperance:** Temperance is the virtue that enables one to use according to right reason the things that are pleasant and agreeable to the senses. Complementary virtues are abstinence, which is moderation in food and drink for one's spiritual good; sobriety, which

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regulates one's food and drink according to right reason; diligence, which regulates the desire for ease and comfort; chastity, which controls desire for sexual pleasure in conformance with reason; clemency, which remits punishment for the guilty; meekness, which restrains anger; modesty, which controls the affections and bodily movements; moderation, which tempers curiosity and excessive desire for knowledge; and humility, with which one considers oneself to be small and undeserving of praise and recognition.

- **Fortitude:** Fortitude is the virtue that inspires one to undergo suffering and to undertake difficult tasks. Complementary virtues are magnanimity, which inclines one to heroic virtue; magnificence, which inclines one to do great things; patience, which keeps one's soul at peace in spite of opposition or difficulty; and perseverance, which enables one to pursue good causes to completion.

Vices or bad habits

We have been discussing good habits; how about bad habits? When we fail to practice virtues, that is good moral habits, we are in danger of replacing them with the opposite bad habits or vices. Bad habits are called vices. One or a few bad acts of a particular kind do not make a vice or bad habit; but a continual practice of particular bad acts becomes habitual, therefore a vice. There exists what are called the Capital Sins. If these were practiced on a regular basis, they would become Capital Vices.

Capital Sins or Vices: The capital sins or vices and their opposing virtues are as follows:

Vices	Opposing Virtues
Pride	Humility
Avarice	Generosity
Lust	Chastity
Anger	Meekness
Gluttony	Temperance
Envy	Brotherly Love
Sloth	Diligence

Below is a brief explanation of each of the capital sins or vices.

Pride: Pride is considered “the original and most serious of the seven deadly sins, and indeed the ultimate source from which the others arise.” It has been defined as, “a desire to be more important or attractive than others, failing to acknowledge the good work of others, and excessive love of self (especially holding self out of proper position toward God).” The best known example of pride is Lucifer’s pride, which caused his fall from Heaven. He enticed Adam and Eve to rebel against God by playing on their pride. They weren’t satisfied to be like God, they wanted to be

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gods. Pride comes before falling into all sins, because when one sins he or she is putting his or her own will ahead of God's will.

Avarice or Greed: Avarice or Greed a sin of excess. It is an excessive and insatiable appetite to acquire material wealth in particular, but also power, prestige, privilege, and other worldly things. Having wealth in itself is not sinful, as long as one considers oneself a trustee of God's abundance and uses it for the benefit of others less fortunate. Greed is the root of a whole host of sins, such as stealing, bribery, hoarding, and vandalism

Lust or lechery: Lust or lechery is usually considered "as excessive thoughts or desires of a sexual nature. It is the root cause of many sins, such as fornication, adultery, rape, perversion, incest, and the like.

Anger or Wrath: It has been described as, "inordinate and uncontrolled feelings of hatred and anger." It can lead to a lot of different sins, including revenge, murder, assault, and even in extreme cases genocide.

Gluttony: Gluttony has been described as, "the over-indulgence and over-consumption of anything to the point of waste. In the Christian religions, it is considered a sin because of the excessive desire for food, [which of course is not healthy], or its withholding from the needy." Fr. Hardon says in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that gluttony is an "Inordinate desire for the pleasure connected with food or drink. This desire may become sinful in various ways: by eating or drinking far more than a person needs to maintain bodily strength; by glutting one's taste for certain kinds of food with known detriment to health; by indulging the appetite for exquisite food or drink, especially when these are beyond one's ability to afford a luxurious diet; by eating or drinking too avidly, i.e., ravenously; by consuming alcoholic beverages to the point of losing full control on one's reasoning powers. Intoxication that ends in complete loss of reason is a mortal sin if brought on without justification, e.g., for medical reasons."

Envy or Covet: Envy is like greed in that it is "characterized by an insatiable desire" for something. However, they are different in that, "greed is largely associated with material goods, whereas envy may apply more generally." Moreover, those guilty of the sin of envy resent others who have something they perceive themselves as lacking, and wish the other person to be deprived of it.

Sloth: In religion sloth takes the form of spiritual laziness. More generally it is considered a failure to utilize one's talents and gifts. It has characterized as "more a sin of omission than of commission."

We become what we do. If we assiduously practice virtues (good habits) over our lifetimes, we will become virtuous and holy persons, brothers or sisters of Jesus and children of God the Father, full of God's sanctifying grace and deserving to inherit Heaven. If on the other hand, we practice vices (bad habits) over our lifetimes, we will become wicked persons who will deserve disin-

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heritance from God's family, deserving to spend eternity in everlasting Hell. As with the Theological Virtues, the only thing that we would like to re-emphasize before we go on to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is that the Moral Virtues are first infused into us at Baptism.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Another help in leading holy and virtuous lives are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. What are these gifts? Together with the infused Theological and Moral virtues, a person in the state of sanctifying grace possesses the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of which Isaiah says “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1-2). By the shoot of the stump of Jesse, Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah, the Christ (*Christos*) Jesus Christ. Jesse was David’s father, and Isaiah was prophesying that the Messiah would be a descendent of David of the tribe of Judah. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are “permanent dispositions in the soul which give the soul the ability to respond quickly and with ease to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. They are called Gifts because they are given to the soul with grace at Baptism and Confirmation” (Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible). The *Catechism* says that they are “permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (No. 1830). The gifts “belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David” (No. 1831).

All Christians in God's friendship possess the gifts, gifts that are dispensed by Jesus Christ to his brothers and sisters. In this regard, St. Paul says, “Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God” (Romans 8:14). The infused gifts of the Holy Spirit disposes the just souls to be moved in accordance with God's will. The gifts are seven in all:

- **Knowledge:** Knowledge involves knowing the truths of the Faith. Fr. Jordan Aumann says that knowledge helps “to judge rightly concerning the truths of faith in accordance with their proper causes and the principles of revealed truth.” Fr. John Hardon says of knowledge, that it, “enables us, through some form of relish and warmth of charity, to judge everything from a supernatural viewpoint by means of lesser causes. Closely tied in with this gift is the lesson of past experience, after a person has reamed the emptiness of things created and the hollowness of sin.”
- **Understanding:** Fr. Aumann says that understanding gives us a deeper insight and penetration of divine truths held by faith, not as a short-lived enlightenment, but as a permanent insight. Fr. Hardon tells us that understanding is a “supernatural enlightenment given to the mind for grasping revealed truths easily and profoundly.” It gives us insight into the meaning of what we believe.
- **Wisdom:** Of wisdom, Fr. Aumann says that it gives us the ability to “judge and order all things in accordance with divine norms [rules] and with a connaturality [inborn] that flows from loving union with God.” Fr. Hardon states wisdom “makes the soul responsive to the Holy Spirit in the contemplation [given to us by God] of divine things and in the use, so to speak, of God's ideas for evaluating every contingency [possibility] in the secular and spiritual order.” Wisdom gives us a certain divine contemplation of the truths contained in the articles of the Creed.

- **Counsel:** Fr. Aumann states that counsel renders “the individual docile [easy to teach] and receptive to the counsel of God regarding one’s actions in view of sanctification and salvation.” Fr. Hardon says counsel “is a special gift that assists the mind and perfects the virtue of prudence by enlightening a man on how to decide and command individual supernatural acts . . . Its proper object is the right ordering of particular actions, after the gifts of knowledge and understanding furnish the general principles.”
- **Piety:** According to Fr. Aumann piety gives “filial worship to God precisely as our Father and to relate with all people as children of the same Father.” Fr. Hardon says that piety, “aids and supplements the virtue of justice by disposing us to show reverence for God as a most loving Father and for men as the sons of God.” This gift helps us not only to show reverence to God our Heavenly Father, but also to honor our parents and show respect to our neighbors who are our brothers and sisters.
- **Fortitude:** Fr. Aumann tells us that fortitude helps us “overcome difficulties or to endure pain and suffering with the strength and power infused by God.” Fr. Hardon says that fortitude “goes beyond fortitude as a virtue by carrying to a successful conclusion even the most difficult tasks in the service of God.” Fortitude helps us, “to undertake arduous tasks and to endure long and trying difficulties for the divine glory.” It helps us to carry on in the face of criticism and helps us to persevere in the practice of virtue in spite of oppressive odds. Moreover, it aids us in facing unexpected trials, such as sickness, persecution, and external failure.
- **Fear of the Lord:** Fear of the Lord according to Fr. Aumann causes us “to avoid sin and attachment to created things out of reverence and love of God.” According to Fr. Hardon it contains “the virtue of hope and impels a man to a profound respect for the majesty of God. Its correlative effects are protection from sin through dread of offending the Lord, and a strong confidence in the power of his help.”

Why the gifts are needed in addition to the virtues: Fr. John Hardon says that because of our fallen human nature, our minds and wills, helped by God’s grace working through our virtues, are often not enough to overcome the problems or difficulties that we face in our lives, but necessitate additional help of the gifts. He says of this matter that, “it lies in the need for having a supernatural counterpart for the natural instincts of mind and will. Even the infused virtues are not enough. They do not, by themselves, so perfect a man on the road to heaven that he has no further need of being moved by the yet higher promptings of the Holy Spirit. For whether we consider human reason and will in their natural powers alone, or as elevated by the theological virtues, they are still very fallible and require help: wisdom against folly, understanding against dullness, counsel against rashness, fortitude against fears, knowledge against ignorance, piety against hardness of heart, and fear of God against pride. The gifts of the Holy Spirit supply this help by giving us remedies against these defects and making us amenable to the promptings of his grace” (*The Catholic Catechism*, Part One: Doctrines of the Faith, VI. The Grace of God Gifts of the Holy Spirit). Therefore, both the gifts and the virtues are needed for salvation.

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Difference between gifts and virtues: What are the difference between gifts and virtues? According to Fr. Aumann, there are several differences between the gifts and the virtues:

- The infused virtues operate under the control of the individual's reason illumined by faith and prompted by actual grace. On the other hand, only the Holy Spirit can actuate the gifts, to put them into operation.
- Since the infused virtues operate under the direction and control of reason illumined by faith, their operations are confined to the strictly human level. On the other hand, since the gifts have the Holy Spirit as their cause, they operate at the divine or supernatural level.
- The soul is fully active in the exercise of the infused virtues; the soul's acts are produced in a human manner and it is fully conscious that it works when and how it pleases. On the other hand, the exercise of the gifts is entirely different. The Holy Spirit is the unique cause of the gifts; the soul is receptive, though remains conscious and free. Thus we preserve freedom and merit under the operation of the gifts, but the soul merely agrees with the divine action, which belongs entirely to the Holy Spirit.

As with the Theological and Moral Virtues, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are first infused into us at Baptism.

FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are defined as “Virtuous acts which are performed under the influence of grace and which are accompanied by a certain spiritual joy . . . They are called Fruits of the Holy Spirit because they are the products of grace, which is given by the Holy Spirit” (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*). Moreover, in the beginning, virtuous acts are frequently difficult and distasteful. But with the practice of virtue such acts become easier and are accompanied by a pleasure or spiritual joy; then acts of virtue are called fruits.

How many fruits are there? St. Paul (Gal. 5:22) enumerates nine fruits: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, modesty, and continency. In some Latin translations of this Epistle, three additional fruits have been added to the list, bringing the total to twelve. The *Baltimore Catechism*, following the Challoner-Rheims New Testament, lists twelve fruits. However, the enumeration of Paul was not meant to be complete, the number nine being symbolic. A fruit is in reality “any virtuous deed in which one delights.” As we become holy and make use of our seven gifts, we will see certain effects taking place in our lives. These effects are called the “Fruits of the Holy Spirit.” In line with what we have just said, the Church has identified twelve fruits, which are listed, in turn.

1. **Charity:** love for God and others.
2. **Joy:** happiness in living the Christian life.
3. **Peace:** inner calmness, even in difficulties.
4. **Patience:** kindly putting up with the faults of others.
5. **Kindness:** concern for the needs of others.
6. **Goodness:** setting a good example in all that we do.
7. **Continence:** the proper balance in our desire for pleasure.
8. **Mildness:** (Meekness): being gentle towards others in words and deeds.
9. **Fidelity:** being loyal to God and the people we are committed to.
10. **Longsuffering:** an extraordinary patience in enduring suffering.
11. **Modesty:** having respect for ourselves and others in conversation, dress, etc.
12. **Chastity:** proper attitude toward others and control over our sexual desires.

Jesus told us that we would receive the fruits of the Holy Spirit only if we are united with him through prayer and the sacraments.

THE WORKS OF MERCY

Now that we have discussed what it means to live more holy and virtuous lives, let's go on to the means necessary to achieve holiness and union with God in this life and for eternity. To do so requires that we practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, also called good works. We demonstrate our love and devotion to God by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Jesus summarizes the heart of the works of mercy in the following quotation taken from the Gospel of Matthew:

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Corporal Works of Mercy

The *Catechism* states that the Corporal Works of Mercy are, “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in bodily necessities” (No. 2447). The Corporal Works of Mercy are as follows:

- **To feed the hungry:** “For I was hungry and you gave me to eat” (Matthew 25:35). We must never turn away anyone who is hungry. Those in authority should prevent unemployment as best they can. Giving work is the best means for removing the necessity of feeding the unemployed. Saint Louis IX of France, a contemporary of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Dominic, provided daily food to the poor, and often served them himself. Many charitable people today, especially the religious institutions, Catholic Charities and the

like, feed the hungry. Lay people can help out best by giving work to all they can afford to help; work is better for the able-bodied than direct alms-giving.

- **To give drink to the thirsty:** “I was thirsty and you gave me to drink.” (Matthew 25:35). Our Lord says that a cup of cold water given in his name shall not go unrewarded (Mark 9:40). Giving medicine belongs to this work of mercy. Those who construct reservoirs, or who purify public drinking water, are giving drink to the thirsty, this is especially true in the poor third world countries.
- **To clothe the naked:** “I was . . . naked and you clothed me . . .” (Matthew 25:36). Many make a practice of giving clothes to the poor; other gifts belong to this kind of alms. The story of Saint Martin, giving half his cloak to a beggar, exemplifies this work of mercy.
- **To visit the imprisoned:** “I was in prison and you came to me.” (Matthew. 25:36). Those who visit the prisoners in jails and give them instruction and material help are doing a work of mercy. In the Middle Ages the Order of Ransom was founded for the ransom of Christians held captive by the Turks. It is said that more than a million Christians were thus ransomed, either with money, or by others taking their place. In the 19th century Cardinal Lavignerie established the Order of the White Fathers, aimed at freeing slaves in Africa. If it isn't practical to visit the imprisoned, one could write them or become a pen pal to a prisoner or one could provide books or magazines for them to read or study. Above all, one could pray for their conversion. Although St. Therese of Lisieux never visited a prison, she constantly prayed for the conversion of criminals.
- **To shelter the homeless:** “I was a stranger and you took me in...” (Matthew 25:35). Those who do this work of mercy are like the Good Samaritan. Those who provide clean and comfortable homes for the poor at low rates of rent practice this work of mercy. Saint Paul said: “Hospitality do not forget; for by this some, not being aware of it, have entertained angels” (Hebrews 13:2). In olden times travelers stopped for the night or for food in the monasteries. In the Alps, the monks of Saint Bernard perform this work of mercy when they rescue, with the aid of their famous breed of dogs, travelers who have met with accidents. Providing alms to the Light House Mission or the Salvation Army who help shelter the homeless or providing gifts to Hurricane or Tsunami relief are call examples of helping to shelter the homeless. Those who contribute their time to building homes for Habitat for Mankind are helping to shelter the homeless.
- **To visit the sick:** “I was sick and you cared for me...” (Matthew 25:36). When we visit the sick, in order to give them temporal or spiritual relief, we do an act of mercy. To build, support, or aid a hospital or a patronage for the sick is a most meritorious act of charity. Doctors and nurses who perform their duties to please God and the benefit their neighbor will be rewarded in Heaven. Several religious orders have been founded for the express purpose of taking care of the sick, such as the orders founded by Saint John of God and Saint Vincent de Paul. Mother St. Francesca Cabrini helped found numerous hospitals in

the Western Hemisphere for the needy. Rose Hawthorne, daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne and a convert to Catholicism, started the Hawthorne Dominicans and built hospitals to care for cancer victims. The sisters have seven homes in the U.S. today that serve the needs of terminal cancer patients who cannot pay for their care. To this day the sisters do not charge their patients. Nor do they rely on government support; they accept neither Medicare nor Medicaid. Visiting the elderly and the sick in their homes and in nursing homes is another meritorious way to fulfill this work of mercy.

- **To bury the dead:** “Amen, I say to you, insofar as you did it for one of these least of my brothers, you did it for me.” (Matthew 25:40). To attend a funeral, visit a house of mourning, or aid the bereaved family, are works of merit. Other corporal works of mercy are: helping out during a fire or accident, rescuing one in danger of death, etc. Every word or act done in the name of or for the sake of Christ is a work of mercy, and will be rewarded.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy

The *Catechism* says that the Spiritual Works of Mercy are “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in spiritual necessities” (No. 2447). They are actions that help our neighbors achieve Heaven. There are seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, which are as follows:

- **To admonish the sinner:** “...there will be more joy in Heaven at the repentance of one sinner than at ninety-nine of the righteous who had no need of repentance.” (Luke 15:7). Whenever we think our words may have a good effect, we should not hesitate to admonish the erring prudently. Those in authority, such as parents and teachers, are bound to admonish those under them of their faults, even if in doing so they bring trouble upon themselves. Good example is another way of admonition. In admonishing sinners, we must do so with gentleness and charity. Otherwise we might only produce results the opposite of what we wish. It would be wrong, if with a little trouble we could save a sinner from sin, did we not speak to save him; it would, moreover, be a loss of great grace for ourselves. “He who causes a sinner to be brought back from his misguided way, will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).
- **To instruct the ignorant:** “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” (Matthew 16:15). Missionaries, catechists, confessors. Christian writers and teachers—all who teach religion or other useful knowledge—are doing an important work of mercy, and will receive a reward. “They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity” (cf. Daniel 12:3). Those who collect money for foreign missions do a work of mercy.
- **To counsel the doubtful:** “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you . . . Let not your hearts be troubled . . .” (John 14:27). We should be most zealous in helping those whom a word may save or aid. We should be happy if the word we say helps a doubtful one

to become firm in his or her faith! As in admonishing sinners, advising the doubtful should be done prudently, and gently, to effect good results. It is seldom effective to rush into heated argument. One should pray for guidance before giving counsel.

- **To comfort the sorrowful:** “Come to me, all you grown weary and burdened, and I will refresh you.”(Matthew 11:28). We can comfort the afflicted by showing them sincere sympathy, by suggesting consolations, and by helping them in their need. To comfort the sorrowful is a work of mercy, similar to curing the sick, since grief is a mental and emotional ailment. To give comfort, we may speak of God's providence, of his love for every single one of his creatures, of the happiness he reserves for us in Heaven, when all earthly sorrows and troubles will be ended.
- **To bear wrongs patiently:** “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you.”(Luke 6:27-28). By being patient with injustice, we benefit both ourselves and our neighbors. Our patience might help them realize their wrongdoing. It is, however, wrong to permit others to falsely accuse us of a serious crime and not defend ourselves. But we should be patient, for love of God.
- **To forgive all injuries:** “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12). We must not seek revenge. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). We must forgive others, as we hope God will forgive us. Instead of seeking revenge, those who wish to imitate the saints go out of their way to do favors to those who injure them. Like Jesus Christ, they love all men.
- **To pray for the living and the dead:** “Father, I desire that they, too, may be with me where I am...” (John 17:24). In 2 Maccabees, Judas Maccabee ordered that sacrifices be offered in the Temple in Jerusalem for Jewish soldiers who had been killed while wearing pagan good-luck charms (12:38-46). We may not see the effects of our prayers, but God sees. Not one single prayer raised to God from a sincere heart is wasted. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Prayers do good not only to those we pray for, but for those who do the praying.

This completes our discussion of the various elements that are needed for each of us to live holy and virtuous lives.

OUR ENEMIES: THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

The World, the Flesh, and the Devil are our enemies and can militate against our spiritual lives and threaten our eternal salvation. You have probably heard someone say, “The Devil made me do it”! And it’s true that sometimes Satan is the source of our temptation, but not all temptations come from the Devil. Some of our temptations are due to concupiscence, for as St. James says, “The tug and lure of his own passion tempt every man” (James 1:14). The World, the Flesh, and the Devil all militate against our desire to achieve union with God in this life and the next in Heaven. They are all sources of temptation that can lead us away from God and to everlasting damnation in Hell.

Why God allows us to be tempted by our spiritual enemies: There are several reasons God permits us to be tempted by our spiritual enemies. For one, it provides us with opportunities to achieve greater merit. In this regard, St. Paul says: “You can trust God not to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Fr. Jordan Aumann, who was one of the world’s most prominent spiritual theologians and directors, gives us other reasons why God allows us to be tempted. He tells us that there are many advantages to overcoming temptations with the help and grace of God. He says that, “Victory over temptation humiliates Satan, makes the glory of God shine forth, purifies our soul, fills us with humility, repentance, and confidence in the divine assistance. It reminds us to be always vigilant and alert, to mistrust ourselves, to expect all things from God, to mortify our personal tastes. It arouses us to prayer, helps us grow in experience, and makes us circumspect and cautious in the struggle against our enemy. With good reason does St. James say: ‘Happy the man who holds out to the end through trial! Once he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life the Lord has promised to those who love him’ (James 1:12).”

However, to enjoy these advantages of overcoming temptation, we must know what is required to conquer them, with God’s help, of course. To help us do this we shall examine, in turn, each of the sources of temptation: the world, the flesh, and the devil. First let’s deal with our enemy the World. What does it mean to say that the world can be an enemy to our spiritual lives and to our salvation?

The World

We want to preface our remarks by saying that God’s creation is good and not necessarily an obstacle to our sanctification and salvation. The first chapter of the book of Genesis tells us that we are required to believe that the universe and everything in it was created by God; “that it was created in time and not from eternity; that all things were created by God alone; and that all things created were good.” (*Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*). As a consequence, the world is not necessarily an obstacle to our sanctification and salvation. As Fr. Aumann says, our sanctification

and salvation depend on “how we react to the things of the world and the manner in which we use them.” He goes on to say, “Many Christians who lived in the world and were very much a part of the world became great saints. The world becomes an enemy of the Christian only when we become so attached to the things of the world that we fail to advance in the love and service of God. In such cases, the world becomes a source of almost irresistible temptation and a formidable enemy of the spiritual life.” St. Teresa of Avila repeatedly warns us that we must become detached to the things of this world if we are to achieve holiness and union with God.

When and how the worldly spirit become an obstacle to our sanctification and salvation: The things of this world become an enemy to our spiritual lives only when we become excessively attached to them, when we live only for the pleasures and satisfactions that we can get out of created things. According to Fr. Aumann, the worldly spirit is manifested in four ways:

1. The worldly spirit stresses the importance of pleasure, comfort, riches, fame, violence, and power. It advises its followers to enjoy life while they can, to make the most of what the world has to offer, to find security and the maximum bodily comfort.
2. The worldly spirit is found in the ridicule and persecution of those who strive to live honestly and decently. People who live by their senses claim that they are free of all moral restrictions and live as they please, and they make a mockery of any authority or law that would guide people along the path of self-control and obedience. Not wanting to observe the law themselves, they cultivate a special disdain for those who honestly strive to lead good lives.
3. The worldly spirit is found in the pleasures and diversions of those who observe no control in regard to their lower appetites. Excesses in sex and in the use of drugs, alcoholic beverages, and food are accepted as being in good taste socially. The theater, magazines, and other media of entertainment know no restriction except the strong arm of the law or the startled indignation of the public. According to Fr. Aumann, the abnormal becomes normal in the lives of these persons.
4. The worldly spirit is found in the scandal and bad example that confront the earnest Christian at every turn. It is not a question merely of persons who give scandal by their evil lives, but what is even worse, scandal is sometimes given by those who, because of their Christian belief or state in life, should be examples of virtue. With good reason could St. John complain, “the whole world is under the evil one” (1 John 5:19). (Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*)

How to be in the world but not of it: There is an old saying that goes, “Be in the world but not of it.” How can this be so? Fr. Aumann says that the most effective remedy against the influence of the world and worldly persons is to flee; however, “since the majority of Christians must live in the world and still pursue Christian perfection, it is necessary that they strive to

acquire the mind and spirit of Christ, who also lived in the world but was opposed to its spirit.” Father’s advice to live in the world and to not let it overwhelm us is as follows:

- **Avoid occasions of sin:** In this regard, Fr. Aumann says that “He who loves danger will perish in it.’ Whether it be a question of worldly possessions, mundane pleasures, or creature attachments, Christians must keep themselves from temptation.” The occasions that are sinful for one may not be so for another, and for that reason it is difficult to make any universal laws in this matter. Father’s says that the best rule in this matter is to ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” Moreover, remember St. Paul's admonition that not all things that are lawful are prudent.
- **Enliven one's faith:** Fr. Aumann says that “faith is an intellectual assent to certain dogmas and mysteries; when it is perfected it gives us an attitude of mind or a way of judging things in a divine manner. It enables us to see things through the eyes of God, so to speak. A strong faith will enable the Christian to see God in all things and to walk through great dangers unharmed because he is able to rise above those things that are temptations for others. A strong faith will enable the Christian to withstand the taunts and ridicule of worldly persons” (Spiritual Theology).
- **Meditate on the vanity of the World:** This was the advice of St. Teresa of Avila. Regarding this, Fr. Aumann states that “The world passes quickly, and life passes even more quickly. There is nothing stable and permanent in the world’s judgment and friendships; there is nothing completely satisfying in its delights. Those who are applauded today are criticized tomorrow; the evil prosper, for they have their reward in this world. But Christians, who realize that they have not here a lasting city but are travelers to the eternal fatherland, know that only God is changeless and only his justice and truth will remain forever. For that reason, only those who do the will of God ‘abide forever” (1 John 2:17) (Spiritual Theology).
- **Ignore what the World Thinks:** In this regard, Fr. Aumann advises us not “To be concerned about ‘what they will say”, for this is “an attitude unworthy of a Christian. Jesus said explicitly that he would deny before his heavenly Father anyone who denies him before men” (Matthew 10:33). It is therefore necessary for the Christian to take a firm stand in this matter and to follow the injunction of Christ to the letter: “He who is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30). And St. Paul warns that he is not a disciple of Christ who would be concerned about pleasing men (Galatians 1:10).

Just one final word of advice from Fr. Aumann’s in this regard; he warns us that “One who desires to reach sanctity must be absolutely indifferent to what the world may think or say. One's only concern must be to do the will of God, no matter what the cost. And it is best to make this decision from the very first, so that all may know at the outset where one stands. We have been warned by Christ that the world will hate and persecute us (John 15:18-20), but if the world sees that we stand firm in our decision to follow Christ and his laws, it will ultimately leave us in peace and

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consider the battle lost. The best way to conquer the world is not to yield a single pace, but to take an unswerving stand in renouncing its false maxims and its vanities” (*Spiritual Theology*). I have always told my students that whenever the world praises us, we had better examine our lives very carefully, because we are probably doing something drastically wrong.

The Flesh

Now let’s go into our next topic, the Flesh. What do we mean by this, and how can it militate against our salvation? Fr. Aumann tells us that although the world and the devil are our main enemies, the flesh is our most formidable enemy. By the flesh we mean the disordered operation of our senses due to original sin. Fr. Aumann tells us that the flesh wages war against us in two ways: by its insatiable desire for pleasure, which can threaten our eternal salvation; and by its instinctive fear of suffering, which is an obstacle to sanctification. Because of these detrimental effects, we need to know how to combat these dangerous tendencies.

Since God gave us a desire for pleasure, what is the problem with it? Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy, to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin.

Fr. Aumann points out that a problem occurs when we attempt to discriminate the difference between honest pleasure from disordered and forbidden pleasure, and how to keep ourselves within the boundaries of the former. The enjoyment of lawful pleasures often becomes occasions or stimulation to disordered and unlawful pleasures. To help us make the morally correct distinction and practice between lawful and unlawful pleasures, the Church has always advocated that we practice mortification by depriving ourselves of many lawful pleasures. This is one of the main reasons we fast and abstain.

He also tells us that our appetites associated with nutrition and generation create the largest problems for us. The former is needed to maintain the survival of the individual and the latter the survival of the human species. Satisfying the appetite for food and drink and the need to procreate the human species is our principal struggle. The problem occurs when we try to satisfy these appetites without regard for the maintenance of the individual and the species. If reason does not intervene to keep these instinctive appetites within morally acceptable limits, they can easily lead to the destruction of the individual and the species. He says that, “It is incredible how much harm an unmortified appetite can cause in us, not only as regards perfection, which is absolutely impossible without mortification, but even as regards our eternal salvation. Sensual people not

only are not united with God, but they also lose the taste for divine things, as St. Paul teaches (1 Corinthians 2:14)” (Spiritual Theology).

Some advice on learning to control our desire for pleasure: Fr. Aumann lists several remedies, both natural and supernatural, that are helpful in controlling sensuality, but as he points out the most effective remedies proceed from faith and are strictly supernatural.

- **Custody of the Senses:** This involves avoiding the near occasions of sin. Control of the senses, especially the senses of sight, is the most important to maintain in order to overcome the desire for unlawful and sinful pleasures. Fr. Aumann says that sincere resolutions and unswerving determination are not enough, that sin is simply too glamorous and fascinating for us to overcome if we place ourselves in occasions of sin. To do so is to tempt God. He states that in such unguarded circumstances, “The senses are aroused, the imagination is excited, passion is strongly stirred, self-control is lost, and the fatal fall takes place” (Spiritual Theology).
- **Self-denial:** Never go to the limit in regard to satisfactions that are permitted. Father warns us that this requires self-denial and sometimes even denying ourselves lawful pleasures, especially if we are inclined to sensate satisfactions. To make his point he quotes Clement of Alexandria who said that those who do everything that is permitted will very readily do that which is not permitted.
- **Beneficial Occupation:** Perhaps you have heard the old saying that, “Idle hands are the hands of the Devil.” We might add an idle mind as well. In this regard Fr. Aumann says that “The seed of sensuality finds fertile ground in a soul that is unoccupied and slothful. Sloth is the mother of all vices, as we read in Scripture, but in a special way it is fertile ground for sins of the flesh.” He advises that those of us who wish to preserve ourselves from the demands of concupiscence must endeavor to keep ourselves occupied in some useful and beneficial exercise, especially intellectual activities that keep the mind profitably occupied (Spiritual Theology).
- **Sense of Christian Dignity:** We are rational creatures created in the image and likeness of God. It is undignified to our humanity to allow ourselves to be carried away by the sensuality that we share in common with animals. More important yet, Baptism has raised us above the natural order to the supernatural level. Through sanctifying grace we have become adopted children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ his only begotten son. Moreover, grace has made us temples of the Holy Spirit in which dwell the Father and the Son. As long as we remain in God's grace our sonship or daughterhood makes us heirs to Heaven, for as St. Paul says, “and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:17). Moreover, in regard to disordered sensuality he said, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? . . . Do you not know that

your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:15, 19-20).

- **Remembrance of the Passion of Christ:** Father Aumann says that “Motives inspired by love and gratitude are much nobler than those that originate in fear. Jesus was nailed to the Cross because of our sins. Basic gratitude toward the Redeemer ought to help keep us from sin. The consideration of the suffering Savior ought to make us ashamed of seeking our bodily delight.” St. Paul made this perfectly clear when he said, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24).
- **Humble and Persevering Prayer:** The Bible is full of statements declaring that it is impossible to conquer concupiscence without God's grace (See Wisdom 8:21; Sirach 23:6). Prayer is recommended as one of the chief channels of his grace.
- **Devotion to Mary:** The Church has long recommended devotion to the Immaculate Virgin Mary as help against temptations of the flesh. In this regard, Fr. Aumann reminds us that “she is the Mediatrix of all graces and the refuge of sinners.” Moreover, “A tender devotion to our Blessed Mother can be a constant reminder to live a life of virtue, and it can be a basis for hope in her maternal protection.”
- **Reception of the Sacraments:** Since the Sacraments are the principal channels of God's grace, it is not without saying that a frequent reception of the Sacraments is the most effective way to do battle with temptations of the flesh. According to Fr. Aumann, “This is a certain and efficacious remedy against all types of sin, but especially against the attacks of concupiscence.” For example Confession not only eliminates past sins, but also protects us from committing future sins. Father tells us that, “The soul that is habituated to sins of the flesh should approach this fountain of purification and should regulate the frequency of confession according to the strength it needs in order not to fall again.” He says that, “It is necessary to anticipate possible falls and to approach the sacrament of penance when we note that we are weakening and are losing strength. In this way we can regain strength and thereby avoid the fall that threatened us.” Moreover, Father recommends frequent communion to help combat temptations of the flesh. Regarding this he says, “Holy Communion has a supreme efficacy against the concupiscence of the flesh. Our Lord diffuses over us the graces of fortitude and resistance against the power of the passions. His most pure flesh is placed in contact with our sinful flesh to spiritualize it.” This is especially true for young people, because, “Experience in the direction of souls shows clearly that there is nothing so powerful and efficacious for keeping a young person in temperance and chastity as daily or frequent Communion” (*Spiritual Theology*).
- **Consideration of Sin's Punishment:** All of the remedies suggested above to help us overcome sensuality are of a positive nature. If they are not a powerful enough deterrent to curbing sins of the flesh, perhaps a consideration of the pain of Hell will motivate the

habitual sinner to repentance and avoidance of the near occasions of sin. And as Fr. Aumann points out, even if a person repents of sin and obtains forgiveness, he still owes the debt of temporal punishment; he or she will have to pay for the offense against God or the damage inflicted on his neighbor by his sin either in this life with penance or in the next life with suffering in purgatory. In either case, as Father warns, “the suffering that will have to be endured far exceeds the pleasure that the individual enjoyed in sinning. From this point of view alone it is a very poor exchange” (*Spiritual Theology*).

I remember a cartoon in which two men are soaking in a pool of intensely hot water in Hell, and the one said to the other, “John’s wife was not worth this.”

The role of suffering in our fight against the Flesh: What role does suffering play in our fight against the Flesh? The other way that the flesh wages war against us is instinctive fear of suffering, which, according to Fr. Aumann is an obstacle to our sanctification. We run from pain because we love pleasure so much. St. Teresa of Avila tells us that those who are to reach the heights of sanctity must learn to dominate their fear of suffering. St John of the Cross gives special emphasis to the love of suffering to pay for the damage caused by one's sins and to achieve union with God. An outstanding example of one embracing suffering was St. Teresa of Lisieux who when she spit up blood for the first time from consumption (Tuberculosis) rejoiced because she could now begin to suffer for her salvation and the salvation of others. Now this does not mean that we should like suffering; this would make one a masochist. But to embrace whatever suffering comes our way in life and unite it to Christ’s suffering gives our suffering redemptive value. St. Teresa of Avila has said to achieve perfection one must first become detached from the things of the world. Fr. Aumann tells us that there is nothing that more readily detaches us from created things than the pains of suffering. This is true because the suffering person is more likely to raise his or her eyes to heaven and long for his or her heavenly home.

In this worldly vale of tears, suffering and sorrow are going to come our way whether or not we want them or not. So isn’t it better to embrace it and not waste it on bitterness and despair? Certainly! Since the fall of man our human lot has been one of suffering, sorrow, death, and destruction. Therefore, we might as well resign ourselves to dealing with these evils in life. The way we deal with them will determine not only our degree of happiness in this life, but in the next life as well. There is no other way to Heaven, for as Jesus said, “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). According to Fr. Aumann, “There is no other way; it is necessary to embrace suffering, to take up one's cross, and to follow Christ to the height of Calvary; not to see there how they crucified him, but to be crucified at his side. There is no sanctification without crucifixion with Christ.” He said that those who weep and mourn are blessed because they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:5).

Also, redemptive suffering helps to restore the imbalance caused by sin. Fr. Aumann explains that actual sin upsets the balance of divine justice that was first upset by Adam and Eve's original sin and reestablished by Christ's redemption. This is true because, “actual or personal sin places the weight of pleasure on the scale of justice, for every sin carries with it some pleasure or satisfaction.

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It is therefore necessary that the equilibrium of divine justice be reestablished by the weight of sorrow placed on the other scale” (Spiritual Theology). The offense against God and the damage caused by our sins must be paid for by some form of suffering, either in this life or the next.

Practical advice on how to cope with suffering: Fr. Aumann gives us several ways that we can cope with suffering, which are as follows:

- **Acceptance of Duties:** Never omit any of our duties because of the suffering or difficulty it causes. In this regard, Fr. Aumann says that if one neglects a serious obligation without any reason other than the inconvenience or slight difficulty involved in performing it, he or she commits a serious sin. Moreover, even if the obligation is light, it is necessary for one to perform his or her duties in spite of a natural dislike for them.
- **Resignation to Crosses:** The crosses that God sends us directly or allows to happen to us have a great value for sanctification if we accept them with love and resignation. God uses crosses as instruments for our sanctification.
- **Voluntary Mortification:** The person who takes the initiative to voluntarily practice Christian mortification in its various forms advances in the love of suffering in spite of the repugnance he or she feels.
- **Preferring Suffering to Pleasure:** Fr. Aumann tells us that “The great saints reached heights of sanctity whereby they felt an “instinctive horror for anything that would satisfy their tastes and comfort. When everything went badly with them and the whole world persecuted and calumniated them, they rejoiced and gave thanks to God. If others applauded or praised them, they trembled as if God had permitted those things as punishment for their sins. They hardly took any account of themselves at all or of the heroism that such an attitude presupposes. They were so familiar with suffering that it seemed to them the most natural thing in the world to endure pain” (*Spiritual Theology*). As I never tired of saying to my students, when the world praises us, it is time to closely examine our lives, because we are probably doing something wrong.
- **Offering Oneself as Victim:** The highest state of love of suffering is the example of victim souls. As I said earlier, St. Teresa of Lisieux rejoiced the first time she spit up blood, for now she could begin to suffer for the benefit of others. Victim souls offer up their suffering not only for their own sins, but for the conversion of sinners, the poor souls in Purgatory, the benefit of the Church, vocations to the priesthood and religious life, expiation for the sins of the world, the needs of the poorest of the poor, or other lofty purposes. Fr. Aumann warns though that it “would be a terrible presumption for a beginner or an imperfectly purified soul to place itself in this state.” He says that “The soul that would give itself in this way for the salvation of others must itself be intimately united with God and must have traveled a long way toward its own perfection in charity. It must be a soul well schooled in suffering and even have a thirst for suffering” (*Spiritual*

Theology). God selects victim souls for this work. Therefore, we should not attempt to offer ourselves as victim souls until we have reached a very high state of sanctification and then only with the consent of our confessor or spiritual director. In addition to St Teresa, some of history's great victim souls are St. Catherine of Siena, St. Gemma Galgani, St. Teresa of Avila, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, St Teresa of Lisieux, and St. Padre Pio. Nonetheless, this should not keep us from praying for people in need and to applying sacrifices to their causes until we reach the level of a victim soul.

Redemptive suffering: Several times we have referred to redemptive suffering in this essay. Evil causes much suffering, sorrow, death, and destruction in the world. As we have heard one holy priest say many times over the years in his sermons, “suffering can make us either bitter or better.” We can either be resentful and spiteful, even hateful, because of our infirmities or we can benefit from them by offering them up to God. It is especially beneficial and commendable to offer our suffering to the Blessed Mother at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, who will unite it to her own suffering and that of her son Jesus who, in turn, will offer them to God the Father. Of redemptive suffering Fr. Aumann says:

God accepts the suffering offered to him by a soul in grace for the salvation of another soul or for sinners in general. It is impossible to measure the redemptive power of suffering offered to divine justice with a living faith and an ardent love through the wounds of Christ. When everything else fails, there is still recourse to suffering to obtain the salvation of a sinful soul (Spiritual Theology).

How to make suffering redemptive: How can one do to make his or her suffering redemptive? We can offer our suffering in reparation for our sins and the sins of others; for the poor souls in Purgatory—the Church Suffering—that Jesus will take them to Heaven; for the conversion of sinners, that Jesus will lead them to Heaven; for the poor of the world, especially the poorest of the poor, that somehow their needs will be satisfied; for the sick and the sorrowing in the world, that God will heal and console them; for the poor homeless, abandoned, abused, and orphan children of the world, that they will find loving homes to care for them; for the reverence of all human life from conception to natural death; and for the abandoned, abused, and lonely of the world. To this list could be added prayers and sacrifices for many others in need. Our sacrifices on behalf of the needs of others will earn great merit for us and help fulfill the requirements to perform spiritual works of mercy for the love of our neighbor.

Jesus makes suffering redemptive: Jesus is the one who by his suffering and death on the cross made suffering redemptive. He gave infinite worth to suffering. He is the Suffering Servant who came into the world to suffer and die for mankind. He came into the world to sanctify suffering (Especially see Isaiah 52 and 53). His sacrifice made suffering redemptive. We too can make our suffering redemptive when we unite our suffering to his. We Christians have the duty to take up our crosses daily and follow in the footsteps of Jesus; there is simply no other way to get to Heaven This means that we must embrace our suffering and unit it to his suffering. Why God permits the innocent to suffer is still a mystery; but Christians should consider it a privilege to be able to suffer for Jesus. He was the most innocent person who ever lived, yet he suffered more

than any person who has ever lived. His suffering and death was the greatest injustice ever committed. Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, did not deserve to suffer either, but next to her son, Jesus, she suffered more than any other human being in the history of the world.

The Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Sorrows:

Because of Mary's suffering, she has been given the title Our Lady of Sorrows. Mary was the most perfect person that ever lived, yet she is known as our Lady of Sorrows, because she suffered so much. She became the perfect model for us when she united her suffering to her son's at the foot of the Cross.

Of Mary's suffering Fr. Aumann says, "The supreme excellence of Christian suffering is that suffering souls are configured with Christ in his sufferings and in his death (Phil. 3:10). And at the side of Jesus, the Redeemer, stands Mary, the co-Redemptrix of the human race. Souls enamored of Mary feel a particular inclination to accompany her and to imitate her in her ineffable sorrow. Before the Queen of Martyrs they feel ashamed that they have ever thought of their own comfort and pleasure. They know that, if they wish to be like Mary, they must embrace the Cross."



Why God permits evil: In regard to the latter,

God never permits evil except to bring good from it. The *Catechism* says that "In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: 'It was not you', said Joseph to his brothers, 'who sent me here, but God . . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.'" The *Catechism* goes on to say that "From the greatest moral evil ever committed—the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men—God, by his grace that 'abounded all the more', [Cf. Rom 5:20.] brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good" (No. 312). Elsewhere the *Catechism* states:

But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, 'Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away.' And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some

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greater good. Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault. . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'" (No. 412).

The *Catechism* is here referring to the sin of Adam and Eve, but the quote is quite applicable to actual sin as well. In this regard, one of my students perceptibly said several years ago that, "perhaps God allowed Adam and Eve to sin because it gave him a chance to redeem us in order to show his infinite love for us." This is the ultimate example of God causing good to result from evil; the greatest good of all time—the redemption of mankind—resulting from the worst evil of all time—the fall of mankind. God let Adam and Eve sin so that he could one day show the human race how much he loved them by sending his only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die for their salvation (See John 3:16). One of classrooms at John Paul II Catholic High School used to display over a chalkboard the saying, "The worst thing that ever happened, the suffering and death of Jesus, is best thing that ever happened, for us." Another slogan says, "Good Friday was bad for Jesus, but good for us."

Even after discussing all of these reasons God permits evil, the existence of evil in the world is largely a mystery. In this regard, the *Catechism* tells us, "The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life" (No. 324).

Elsewhere the *Catechism* states, "We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God 'face to face', will we fully know the ways by which—even through the dramas of evil and sin—God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest for which he created heaven and earth" (No. 314). Now that we have finished discussing the second enemy to our spiritual lives and eternal salvation, the Flesh, let's go on to discuss the influence of the Devil. In what ways is the Devil a threat to our salvation?

The Devil

Although most temptations come from the world and the flesh, many temptations do proceed from the devil, however. St. Peter says of the Devil, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Fr. Aumann tells us that the best way to avoid or defeat temptations from the Devil is not to enter into dialog with him in the first place. Sins are pleasurable to contemplate and to perform and the longer one continues to dialog with him the more glamorous the thoughts or behavior become. We should stay away from near or proximate occasions of sin and when doubts assault our faith, we should put them out of our minds at once. The same holds true when our senses are bombarded by allurements to sin; we should put them out of reach of our senses or out of our minds. If we do not do this at once, we will gradually weaken and are in danger of giving consent of the will. The

longer one ponders the enjoyment of the sinful thoughts or behavior, the more desirable and fascinating they become. When this happens, we are in grave danger of mortal sin if the matter is a serious one.

We must remember that mortal sin is the spiritual death of the soul. Mortal sin loses everything for us: one would lose sanctifying grace, the life of God within him or her. As a bitter consequence one would no longer be a temple of the Holy Spirit, or a child of God the Father, or a brother or sister to his son Jesus, or an heir to Heaven. One would have lost all of the merits that he or she had earned throughout his or her entire lifetime. If one should die before repenting his or her infidelity, he or she would be in danger of eternal damnation in Hell. The Devil, who tricked this person into committing the sin, would be sneeringly and gleefully laughing all the while.

How to overcome temptations from the Devil: Fr. Aumann provides us with excellent advice on what to do before, during, and after temptation from the Devil in a list which follows:

- **Vigilance even before temptations arise:** The Devil never tires of trying to seduce us. He appears to leave us alone at times to return and assault us when we least expect it. To be ready for the inevitable attack, Father's advice is that during periods of calm remain convinced that he will resume the battle, perhaps with even greater intensity than before. Consequently, we must remain on our guard at all times or we will be taken by surprise. He tells us that we do this by avoiding the near occasions of sin, by trying to anticipate unexpected assaults, by practicing self-control, by frequently examining our consciences, by frequently renewing our firm resolution never to sin again, and by avoiding sloth or spiritual laziness (*Spiritual Theology*).
- **Prayer:** Fr. Aumann tells us that vigilance alone is not enough. He says, "To remain in the state of grace and to be victorious against all temptations require an efficacious grace from God, obtainable only through prayer . . . Christ taught us to ask the Father: 'Lead us not into temptation.' It is also reasonable that we should invoke the Blessed Mother, who crushed the serpent's head with her virginal heel; and our guardian angel, who has as one of his principal duties to defend us against the assaults of the devil" (*Spiritual Theology*).
- **Actively resist temptation:** According to Fr. Aumann, it is not enough merely to remain passive when one is being tempted; he says that positive resistance is required. In this regard he says, "This resistance can be either direct or indirect. Direct resistance is that which faces up to the temptation itself and conquers it by doing the precise opposite from that which is suggested. For example, to begin to speak well of a person when we are tempted to criticize him, to give a generous alms when our selfishness would prompt us to refuse, to prolong our prayer when the devil suggests that we shorten it or abandon it altogether." Regarding indirect resistance, he states that it "does not attack the temptation but withdraws from it by distracting the mind to some other object that is completely distinct. This is the type of resistance to be used in temptations against the faith or against purity, because in these cases a direct attack would very likely increase the intensity of the

temptation itself. The best practice in these cases is a rapid but calm practice of a mental exercise that will absorb our internal faculties, especially the memory and imagination, and withdraw them from the object of the temptation. It is also helpful to have some hobby or pastime or activity that is interesting enough to absorb one's attention for the moment” (*Spiritual Theology*).

- **Discuss temptations with confessor or spiritual director:** Fr. Aumann says that it is helpful to discuss temptations with one's confessor or spiritual director, especially if they are temptations that occur repeatedly or continue to persist.
- **Thank God for help overcoming temptation:** When one successfully overcomes temptation, he or she should give thanks for God's help and ask for his continued assistance when tempted again.
- **Take care to avoid scrupulosity:** Scrupulosity is a morbid preoccupation with sin. A person suffering from scrupulosity finds it difficult, even impossible to believe in God's infinite love, mercy, and forgiveness. The scrupulous person remains doubtful as to whether or not he has given consent to temptation or that he has been forgiven with the priest's absolution. Fr. Aumann advises persons inclined to scrupulosity “not to examine their consciences minutely and with scrupulosity, for this may provoke the temptation anew and even increase the danger of falling. Sometimes it is better to let a certain period of time pass until the soul becomes more tranquil, and then examine one's conscience carefully as to whether or not sin has been committed. In any event, it is well to make an act of contrition and to make known to the confessor at the proper time the temptation that has been encountered, admitting one's guilt as it appears in the sight of God” (*Spiritual Theology*).

What to do if temptations don't end easily: No matter what one does to overcome the Devil's temptations, sometimes they do not go away immediately. When this happens, what should we do? Fr. Aumann warns that the Devil may attack again with even greater tenacity. When this happens one should not become discouraged. He says:

[T]he “insistence of the devil is one of the best proofs that the soul has not succumbed to the temptation. The soul should resist the attacks as often as necessary but always with great serenity and interior peace, being careful to avoid any kind of anxiety or disturbance. Every assault repulsed is a source of new merit before God and greater strength for the soul. Far from becoming weakened, the soul gains new energies. Seeing that he has lost, the devil will finally leave the soul in peace, especially when he sees that he has not been able to disturb the interior peace of the soul, which sometimes is the only reason he caused the temptation in the first place” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Even if one falls again into serious sin, Fr. Aumann encourages us not to be disheartened. He advises us to, “remember the infinite mercy of God and the lesson of the prodigal son, and then

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cast itself [one's soul] in all humility and repentance into the arms of the heavenly Father, asking him for forgiveness and promising with his help never to sin again. If the fall has been serious, the soul should not be content with a simple act of contrition, but should approach the sacrament of reconciliation and use this sad experience of sin to redouble its [one's soul] vigilance and to intensify its fervor in order not to sin again” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Advice from St. Paul: St Paul gave us some good advice on resisting the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. He says:

[B]e strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians, 6:10-20).

St. Paul is here encouraging us here to arm ourselves with virtues with which to do battle with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Now that we have finished with discussing how to deal with threats to our spiritual lives and eternal salvation produced by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, let's go on to look at some practical advice on how to purify our senses and faculties of the soul.

HOW TO PURIFY THE SENSES AND FACULTIES OF THE SOUL

In order to do this, first we must look at what we mean by the senses and the faculties of the soul. By the senses we mean the ability of humans to hear, smell, taste, touch, and see. By the faculties we mean the operations of the soul including our ability to think (intellect), make decisions (free will), to remember things (memory), and imagine things (imagination). Now to put the faculties in their proper context, let's recall that God created man in his image and likeness. In image God created them with immortal souls and endowed them with faculties of intellect and free will. In addition to these faculties of the soul, man possesses imagination and memory. In likeness he created them in Original Holiness and Original Justice.

Tragically, our first parents lost Original Holiness and Justice for themselves and their children by committing the first sin—the Original Sin. In the fallen state, all of humankind inherited a diminished intellect, a weakened will, a limited memory, and an imagination that can run wild. Moreover, they inherited the desire to sin, called concupiscence, and to experience the wages of sin, which are suffering, sorrow, and death. They were no longer children of God or shared in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. They and all of their children were no longer the Father's heirs. To complete the story, Jesus Christ restored the dignity of man by becoming a man himself and suffering and dying for our sins. He made it possible for man once again to become holy and friends with God; to once again be children of God the Father. We are made friends with God once again at Baptism.

How to purify the senses and faculties of the soul

Fr. Aumann gives us some wise advice on how to purify the senses and faculties of our souls in order to overcome temptation and achieve holiness. Our intellect gives us the ability to think, to reason, to know, to understand. Father Aumann tells us that “The active purification of the intellect normally requires first of all the removal of obstacles to the virtuous use of this faculty. This means that the individual must at the outset reject all vain, useless, and sinful thoughts” (*Spiritual Theology*). Since the imagination is practically uncontrollable and will frequently present to the intellect images that are detrimental to our spiritual health, we must learn to reject or ignore them.

Furthermore, it is necessary that we overcome our ignorance by “studying the truths of faith and seeking to probe their deeper meaning and their application to Christian living” (*Spiritual Theology*). Faith is a personal commitment and surrender to God as well as an intellectual assent to the truths he has revealed. It is a supernatural virtue infused into our souls by God. Faith means to believe in God and his promises. Believing has been defined as, “an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace” (*Catechism*, Nos. 150, 154, 155).

How can we protect ourselves from assaults on our faith: In regard to faith, Fr. Aumann

advises that we should “avoid the vice of intellectual curiosity that engages in the study of sacred truths as a purely scholastic pursuit instead of seeing them as truths by which one lives” (*Spiritual Theology*). Moreover, he says that, “it is necessary to avoid excessive attachment to one's own ideas and opinions, especially in matters of faith. The two attitudes that are especially important here are obedience to the Magisterium of the Church and the cultivation of a mentality that is open and receptive to new developments and applications of revealed truths or theological conclusions” (*Spiritual Theology*).

How to purify the intellect: To purify the intellect, Fr. Aumann recommends that we must let the soul “be led by the light of faith, which is the proximate and proportionate means for the union of the intellect with God in this life” (*Spiritual Theology*). He goes on to say that because the first movement toward God is through faith, the first thing we must do to achieve a closer union with him is to purify our faith and enliven it with charity. The greater the faith of the soul, the more closely is it united with God. In order for the intellect to be prepared for this divine union, it must be purified of all that pertains to the senses and be detached and freed from all that can be clearly comprehended by the intellect

How to purify of the will: The will is the faculty of our souls that helps us choose to do or not to do God's will, to decide to obey or not to obey his commandments. Sometimes it is called the rational appetite. Father Aumann tells us that the “proper object of the will is the good proposed to it by the intellect, but in the appreciation or evaluation of the good, error may creep in. The intellect can judge as a true good something that is only an apparent good, and the will, which is a blind faculty and always follows the apprehension of the intellect, will be impelled toward that object that is taken as if it were a true good.” What he is saying is in order to make good choices, we must strive to inform our intellects with good information and to purify our memories and imaginations. Moreover, “the proper act of the will is love, or the effective union of the will with a known good” (*Spiritual Theology*).

How to achieve union with the divine will: To achieve union with God requires that we subject our wills to his divine will. St. Augustine defined sin as a condition whereby one intentionally does not conform his will to God's. In order to conform our wills to God's we must strive to lead virtuous lives with the help of his grace. In order to achieve total submission of our wills to God's will. In this regard, Fr. Aumann tells us that we “must first detach ourselves from excessive love of created things and from the self-centered love that runs counter to the demands of charity.” Father says that, “It is a fact that the soul is filled with God in the measure and to the degree that it empties itself of creatures” (*Spiritual Theology*). To conclude our discussion of the purification of the will, we will once again quote Father Aumann's wise advice:

The soul that aspires to perfect union with God must strive energetically against its own self-love, which subtly penetrates even holy things. It must examine the true motive for its actions, continually rectify its intentions, and not place as its goal or the goal of all its activities and efforts anything other than the glory of God and the perfect fulfillment of his divine will. It must keep constantly in mind the decisive words of Christ himself, who makes

perfect self abnegation (denial) the indispensable condition for following him: ‘Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps (Luke 9:23).

How to purify the imagination: The imagination is our ability to form mental images. Every idea that we have corresponds to an image impressed upon the imagination. Without images, the intellect cannot know anything. Fr. Aumann says that because of its great importance and influence on our thinking and behavior, the imagination needs a profound purification. When used for good, it can be of great benefit to our sanctification; but he warns, “there is nothing that can cause greater difficulty on the way to sanctification than an imagination that has broken away from the control of reason enlightened by faith” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Father tells us that there are two principal obstacles caused by an uncontrolled imagination: dissipation and temptation. Dissipation of the imagination impedes recollection and an interior life and a life of prayer is impossible without recollection. Before we can pray effectively, we must learn to free ourselves from attractions or distractions from without and turmoil from within. In the parlance of a generation ago, one must become “calm, cool, and collected.” This calming of the self is called composure or recollection. Recollection means collecting the scattered self and returning to the center of one’s being. The person who is distracted by what is going on around him or herself or is daydreaming is not aware of what is happening simply cannot carry on a conversation with God.

How to avoid difficulties with our imagination: Fr. Aumann warns that “Freed of any restraint, the [imagination] paints in vivid colors the pleasure sin provides for the concupiscible appetite, or exaggerates the difficulty the irascible appetite will encounter on the road to virtue, thus leading to discouragement” (*Spiritual Theology*). However, he states that we can avoid difficulties with our imagination if we use the following means:

- **Custody of the senses:** The imagination is fed by images provided by our senses: hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling, and seeing, especially the latter. Fr. Aumann says that “It is necessary that we control the senses, because they provide the images the imagination retains, reproduces, and reassembles that arouse our passions and encourage the consent of our will” (*Spiritual Theology*). I have often told my students to be very careful what they read, look at or listen to, because the objects of perception will be stored in their memories for the rest of their lives. Not only can the initial perception be occasions of sin, but also once stored in memory one never knows when the stored impressions will find their way into the intellect and produce bad thoughts either when they are awake or in dreams when they are asleep.
- **Prudent selection of reading matter:** This requires that we not only avoid reading evil matter, but also matter that fills our minds with useless images. Light reading for relaxation is all right on occasion, but we should not make it a practice to fill our minds with useless images. On the other hand, good spiritual reading can contribute a great deal

to the proper use of the imagination. We should develop the practice of reading holy and profitable material so that the imagination will be positively directed to holy things.

- **Pay attention to the duty of the moment:** Developing the habit of paying attention to the duty of the moment helps us to concentrate our intellectual powers and to discipline the imagination by preventing it from being distracted to other objects, especially sinful objects. Moreover, an old saying goes something like “Idle hands are the hands of the devil.” I might add that an idle mind is in the hands of the Devil as well. Since idleness is one of the primary sources of dissipation or distraction, always paying attention to what we are doing can help us remain profitably engaged.
- **Ignoring distractions:** Although it is difficult in this society where our senses are constantly being bombarded with stimuli, we can make every effort to ignore them. This is easier than trying to combat them directly. Fr. Aumann tells us that “It is possible to keep one's mind and heart fixed on God even in the midst of involuntary distractions” (*Spiritual Theology*).

Purification of the memory: The memory is defined as “the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned.” It is a storehouse of information that has entered our soul via the senses or is processed by the intellect by reasoning. If it were not for memory our minds would be empty. The memory is the filing cabinet of our souls.

Since the memory stores both good and bad knowledge, it must be purified. Throughout our lives we acquire knowledge that is of no use or even harmful for the sanctification of our souls. A lot of this information destroys the peace and tranquility of our souls. These are necessary in order for us to lead lives of prayer and recollection.

How to purify the memory: Fr. Aumann has several suggestions that will help us to purify our memories which follow:

- **Forget past sins:** The first step in learning to control the memory is to forget our own past sins and those of others. According to Fr. Aumann, dwelling on them can cause us new temptations and dispose us to sin again.
- **Stop thinking of past injuries:** Even if we have forgiven others for past injuries, the remembrance of their offenses will disturb our peace of mind and continue to present the offending party in an unfavorable manner. We can best forget offenses against ourselves by realizing that our offenses against God are much greater and to remember his promise that he will forgive us our trespasses only if we forgive others their trespasses against us. We will never reach sanctity or union with God by holding grudges.
- **Remember benefits from God:** This is an excellent way to direct your memory to God. Remembering the many benefits we have received from God, such as the times he has

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pardoned us, protected us from danger, and exercised loving care over us, is an excellent way to arouse our gratitude toward him and to increase our desire of cooperate more faithfully with his graces. Father Aumann says that if to this we add “the recollection of our disobedience and rebellion, of our ingratitude and resistance to grace, our soul will be filled with humility and confusion and will experience the need of redoubling its vigilance and its efforts to be better in the future” (*Spiritual Theology*).

- **Consider motives for Christian Hope:** Father says that this is one of the most effective ways to direct our memory to God and for detaching and purifying it of contact with earthly things. The memory is the foundation of Christian hope, which is the virtue of remembering eternal happiness with God in Heaven. Hope helps us to despise and detach ourselves from the things of this life and to raise our hearts and minds to God.

CONCLUSION

The *Catechism* says of the universal call to holiness, “All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness: ‘Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’” Mt 5:48; No. 2013). Few become perfect and achieve union with God in this life. Most of us hopefully will accomplish this only after we have died and been cleansed in Purgatory, for no unclean thing can enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Revelation 21:27). The *Catechism* continues, “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. (2 Tim 4). Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes” (No. 2015).

We are all called to holiness, to be like Jesus. To be like him we must be perfect as is our heavenly Father. Our main goal in life should be to achieve and maintain union with God. To achieve union with God requires holiness. Jesus is our model for holiness, because he is holy; therefore, being holy means being like Jesus. The closer we become like Jesus, the more like God we become, the closer to the image of God created in our souls.

Jesus is like him because he is the Father's son by nature. We become like the Father by becoming his adopted children by grace, by God dwelling in our souls. One must establish and maintain God's friendship in this life if he or she hopes to enjoy his friendship for eternity. Jesus calls us all to holiness, to sainthood. By doing so we become his brothers and sisters and adopted sons and daughters of his Father; we become members of the Trinitarian Family by adoption and by grace. Being the Father's sons or daughters makes us heirs to Heaven. Jesus called his heavenly Father “Abba”, an intimate reference to the Father, some have even claimed the term is the Jewish equivalent for “Daddy”. As members of God's family we too can truly do as Jesus did, and as he encouraged us to do, call our Heavenly Father “Abba”, “Daddy”.