

A STUDY GUIDE FOR

INTO ALL TRUTH

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WHAT CATHOLIC BELIEVE AND WHY

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INTRODUCTION

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God made this promise to his people: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts” (Jer 31:33). As Christians, we believe that this promise was fulfilled by Christ. Jesus wrote no Scriptures; he engraved the New Covenant on the hearts of his disciples. Saint Paul recognized this: “You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor 3:3). The fellowship of believers, the Church, is called to be the “living Gospel” in every age.

But we will be the living Gospel only if we are living the Gospel. What does this mean? Certainly, at the very least, that we should strive to live according to “the Golden Rule”: “Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) describes this as a summary of the Law of the Gospel (no. 1970). But if this simple—yet challenging—commandment summarizes the moral teaching of Christ, it is also true that it is not specifically Christian. Many religions teach a similar precept; people professing different religions, or no religion at all, seek to follow the Golden Rule. If we wish to live the Golden Rule as Christians, then our faith in Christ should shape the way we do this; what we believe should influence the way we worship, the way we conduct ourselves in our family and the wider society, and the way we deepen our spiritual life. Does it?

I think for some of us all of the time, and for most of us some of the time, the honest answer is No. We believers are somewhat schizophrenic: we profess faith in Christ, but our attitudes to life’s priorities and our judgments about right and wrong are often indistinguishable from the attitudes and judgments of those around us. We do not “connect the dots” between faith and daily life. Why is this? Some critics blame catechetical methods over the past fifty years that were deficient in content. That criticism may be justified, but it is only a partial explanation. It is true that “pre-Vatican II” catechisms presented a lot of doctrine, and demanded a good deal of memorization, but did those methods guarantee that people made the connection between what they believed and

how they lived? No. Many of the Catholics who show up in polls as agreeing with their nonbelieving neighbors on theological and moral issues were formed by the “pre-Vatican II” approach. The challenge is the same, regardless of how the Catholic faith is presented: there is no substitute for making a personal application of what we believe. The purpose of this study guide is to help you do this—whether in a group setting, such as RCIA or a parish study group, or individually. We must ask ourselves: “How does what I believe affect the way I worship? The way I live my life? The way I deepen my personal relationship with God?” And a great tool to help explore these important questions is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

How to Use This Study Guide

Two resources are required for this exploration: a Bible and a copy of the *Catechism*. [Note: Those using this guide with older teens and young adults may choose to use *Youcat* as an alternative to the *Catechism*; numbers referring to the questions in *Youcat* are provided for each session.] There are many translations of the Bible available; an appendix at the end of this *Guide* presents some suggestions on choosing among them. Along with the *Catechism*, I would strongly recommend the *Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and/or a copy of the documents of the Second Vatican Council for further reference.¹ The *Companion* provides extensive citations from the Council documents. Since this *Guide* is related to the book *Into All Truth*, I presume you already have this.

This study guide presents thirteen sessions dealing with the fundamental dogmatic teachings of the Church; they follow the chapters in *Into All Truth*—with the exception that the two chapters on Our Lady are combined into one session. As a remote preparation for study, please read the pertinent chapter in *Into All Truth*. Each session begins with one or two short readings from the Scriptures; in a group setting, one of the participants might read these at the beginning of the meeting. There follows a section called “Background: The Teaching of the Church”. This consists of a quotation from the documents of the Second Vatican Council or one of the recent popes, followed by an indication of the

1. The *Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994). The most easily obtainable translation of the documents of Vatican II is by Austin Flannery.

paragraphs of the *Catechism* (or the questions in *Youcat*) that deal explicitly with the topic, and a summary of the main points presented in that teaching. In a group setting, I would recommend that participants review this before the meeting. In that way, the meeting can be devoted to exploring the significance of these beliefs for our lives.

This exploration is presented in the next section: “Implications and Applications”. There are three parts to this section, keyed to three divisions of the *Catechism*: the celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ, and Christian prayer. The group meeting time should be divided into thirds, to make sure all three parts are covered.

Pertinent paragraphs from the *Catechism* and questions from *Youcat* are provided, and the discussion could begin with one person reading those paragraphs aloud. (Another person might read the biblical citations given in the *Catechism* for those paragraphs. If more background is needed during the conversation, it would be helpful for one of the participants to have a copy of the *Companion* or the documents of Vatican II handy.) There follow several questions for discussion, based on the paragraphs just read. Sometimes notes are given at the end of these questions which refer to other paragraphs of the *Catechism* that might be of interest. The purpose of these questions is to examine how we can live out in practice the Gospel we profess.

To conclude the session, someone might reread the Scripture passage(s) with which the meeting began, and then the concluding prayer, which is taken from the Roman Missal.

SESSION ONE

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The Resurrection is not simply one of many things we believe: *Into All Truth* begins with this mystery because it was the catalyst that led the first disciples to reexamine the meaning of Jesus' death and to realize more profoundly his identity as the Son of God. But the dogma of the Resurrection is not only important because it tells us who Jesus was; it tells us who Jesus is now. The fact that Christ rose from the dead means he is far more than a historical figure for us to admire and emulate: he continues to save, teach, heal, and nourish us in the sacraments; his bodily Resurrection teaches us how sacred are our bodies, destined as they are for eternal glory; and he invites us as members of his Body to participate in sharing his risen life with all people.

Biblical Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12–25

Background: The Teaching of the Church

The Resurrection of Jesus is the fundamental event upon which Christian faith rests (cf. 1 Cor 15:14). It is an astonishing reality, fully grasped in the light of faith, yet historically attested to by those who were privileged to see the Risen Lord. It is a wondrous event which is not only absolutely unique in human history, but which *lies at the very heart of the mystery of time*. In fact, "all time belongs to [Christ]

and all the ages”, as the evocative liturgy of the Easter Vigil recalls in preparing the Paschal Candle. Therefore, in commemorating the day of Christ’s Resurrection not just once a year but every Sunday, the Church seeks to indicate to every generation the true fulcrum of history, to which the mystery of the world’s origin and its final destiny leads.

It is right, therefore, to claim, in the words of a fourth-century homily, that “the Lord’s Day” is “the lord of days”. Those who have received the grace of faith in the Risen Lord cannot fail to grasp the significance of this day of the week with the same deep emotion which led Saint Jerome to say: “Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, it is the day of Christians, it is our day.” For Christians, Sunday is “the fundamental feastday”, established not only to mark the succession of time but to reveal time’s deeper meaning.

John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, no. 2

The *Catechism’s* teaching on Christ’s Resurrection is presented in numbers 638 to 658. The principal points are the following:

1. The Resurrection of Jesus is a historical event attested to by the fact of the empty tomb and the testimony of the disciples to whom he appeared.
2. Christ’s Resurrection did not simply mean that his dead body came back to life. His humanity was transformed by the Resurrection.
3. Although this event took place in history, it also transcends history; it is a mystery of faith that surpasses history.
4. The Resurrection is a work of the Trinity: the Father raised up Christ his Son; the Son effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power; the Holy Spirit gave life to Jesus’ dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship.

5. The Resurrection confirms all Christ's teaching and works; it fulfills God's promises; confirms Christ's divinity; brings about our adoption as sons and daughters of God; and is the principle and source of our own future bodily Resurrection.

Youcat questions: 104–108

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1084–90

Youcat questions 170–71

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Christ now acts through the sacraments, which are words and actions accessible to our human nature. What were the signs and actions by which the risen Christ first revealed himself to his disciples?¹
2. What is meant by the "Paschal mystery"?²
3. What are the various ways the risen Christ is present in the Church's liturgy?

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1720–24

Youcat questions 281–285

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. The appearances of the risen Christ are described in Mt 28, Mk 16, Lk 24, and Jn 20–21.

2. See "Paschal mystery" in the Glossary of CCC for a brief definition and other pertinent paragraphs in the *Catechism*.

1. How does our belief in the Resurrection of the body affect our understanding of what it means to say that we are partakers in the divine nature and that we enter into the glory of Christ?³
2. How do the good things of this world help us appreciate the beatitude God has in store for us? How might possessions and worldly blessings impede our attainment of that beatitude?

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2816–21

Youcat question 520

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What does it mean to say that the Kingdom of God has already come in Christ's death and Resurrection?
2. Why, if the Kingdom is here, are we looking forward to Christ's return? What will this mean in terms of our own experience of the Resurrection?
3. How can our commitment to justice and peace in the world help to extend the effect of Christ's Resurrection?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12–25]

3. See CCC, nos. 997–1001.

Let us pray.
God of everlasting mercy,
who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast
kindle the faith of the people you have made your own,
increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed,
that all may grasp and rightly understand
in what font they have been washed,
by whose Spirit they have been reborn,
by whose Blood they have been redeemed.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen

Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter

SESSION TWO

CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE DEATH

Saint Paul taught that when we celebrate the Eucharist we proclaim the death of the Lord until he returns (1 Cor 11:26). But we are called to imitate the mystery we celebrate, to model our lives on the generous self-giving of Christ. We are to unite our sacrifices with Christ's perfect self-offering in the Eucharist, and to pour out our lives in service to others. We must also die to sin in our daily lives, and in our prayer imitate Jesus' total confidence in the Father's love.

Biblical Reading: Romans 5:18–6:11

Background: The Teaching of the Church

In the passion and death of Christ—in the fact that the Father did not spare His own Son, but “for our sake made him sin” — absolute justice is expressed, for Christ undergoes the passion and cross because of the sins of humanity. This constitutes even a “superabundance” of justice, for the sins of man are “compensated for” by the sacrifice of the Man-God. Nevertheless, this justice, which is properly justice “to God’s measure,” springs completely from love: from the love of the Father and of the Son, and completely bears fruit in love. Precisely for this reason the divine justice revealed in the cross of Christ is “to God’s measure,” because it springs

from love and is accomplished in love, producing fruits of salvation. The divine dimension of Redemption is put into effect not only by bringing justice to bear upon sin, but also by restoring to love that creative power in man thanks to which he once more has access to the fullness of life and holiness that come from God. In this way, Redemption involves the revelation of mercy in its fullness.

...And yet the divine dimension of the Paschal Mystery goes still deeper. The cross on Calvary, the cross upon which Christ conducts His final dialogue with the Father, emerges from the very heart of the love that man, created in the image and likeness of God, has been given as a gift, according to God's eternal plan. God, as Christ has revealed Him, does not merely remain closely linked with the world as the Creator and the ultimate source of existence. He is also Father: He is linked to man, whom He called to existence in the visible world, by a bond still more intimate than that of creation. It is love which not only creates the good but also grants participation in the very life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For he who loves desires to give himself.

...The cross of Christ on Calvary stands beside the path of that admirable commercium, of that wonderful self-communication of God to man, which also includes the call to man to share in the divine life by giving himself, and with himself the whole visible world, to God, and like an adopted son to become a sharer in the truth and love which is in God and proceeds from God.

...What else, then, does the cross of Christ say to us, the cross that in a sense is the final word of His messianic message and mission? And yet this is not yet the word of the God of the covenant: that will be pronounced at the dawn when first the women and then the Apostles come to the tomb of the crucified Christ, see the tomb empty and for the first time hear the message: "He is risen."

John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 7

The *Catechism's* teaching on Christ's redemptive death is presented in numbers 599 to 618.

The principal points are the following:

1. Jesus' death took place according to God's plan.
2. Christ died for our sins.
3. By his death, Christ reveals the depth of God's love for us.
4. Christ's whole life was a self-offering to the Father.
5. Jesus united the Eucharist at the Last Supper with his sacrificial death.
6. Christ's sacrifice is unique: it completes and surpasses all others.
7. Christ's obedience unto death atones for all human disobedience.
8. He gave his life on the cross for all people.
9. Christ invites us to participate in his sacrifice.

Youcat questions 96–103

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1362–72

Youcat questions 208, 212, 216

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the Eucharistic memorial (*anamnesis*) differ from a mere recollection of a

past historical event?

2. How are Christ's sacrifice on Calvary and the sacrifice of the Eucharist the same? How are they different?
3. How does our participation in the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice find expression in our daily lives?¹
4. Why do we offer the Eucharistic sacrifice for those who have died?²

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1987–88, 2099, 2100

Youcat questions 102, 337

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How can we "die" to sin?
2. What sacrifices can I make to express my love for God? How do I unite my sacrifices with Christ's offering on the Cross?

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2605, 2606, and 2738–41

Youcat questions 476–78

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What themes or ideas find expression in Jesus' last words on the Cross?

1. See CCC, no. 2031.

2. See CCC, nos. 958, 1689.

2. How does the Father answer?
3. How does the Father hear and answer our prayer? How can we make our prayer more like the prayer of Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: Romans 5:18–6:11]

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,

who as an example of humility

for the human race to follow

caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,

graciously grant that we may heed his lesson

of patient suffering

and so merit a share in his Resurrection.

Who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for Palm Sunday

SESSION THREE

THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

The fact that Jesus Christ is truly our Brother, a man like us in all things but sin, means that he serves as our example: he shows us how to love God with all our heart, all our mind, and all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Because he is the eternal Son of God, he is worthy of our worship. We adore Christ who is truly present in the Eucharist, and we serve him in others, because he has united himself by virtue of the Incarnation with the whole human race.

Biblical Reading: John 1:1–18

Background: The Teaching of the Church

For the Word of God did not assume a feigned and unsubstantial body, as already in the first century of Christianity some heretics declared and who were condemned in these solemn words of St. John the Apostle: “For many seducers are gone out into the world, who do confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Here is a seducer and the antichrist”, but He united to His divine Person a truly human nature, individual, whole and perfect, which was conceived in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost. Nothing, then, was wanting to the human nature which the Word of God united to Himself.

Consequently He assumed it in no diminished way, in no different sense in what concerns the spiritual and the corporeal: that is, it was endowed with intellect and will and the other internal and external faculties of perception, and likewise with the desires and all the natural impulses of the senses. All this the Catholic Church teaches as solemnly defined and ratified by the Roman Pontiffs and the general councils. “Whole and entire in what is His own, whole and entire in what is ours.” “Perfect in His Godhead and likewise perfect in His humanity.” “Complete God is man, complete man is God.” Hence, since there can be no doubt that Jesus Christ received a true body and had all the affections proper to the same, among which love surpassed all the rest, it is likewise beyond doubt that He was endowed with a physical heart like ours; for without this noblest part of the body the ordinary emotions of human life are impossible. Therefore the Heart of Jesus Christ, hypostatically united to the divine Person of the Word, certainly beat with love and with the other emotions—but these, joined to a human will full of divine charity and to the infinite love itself which the Son shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit, were in such complete unity and agreement that never among these three loves was there any contradiction of or disharmony.

Pius XII, Encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*, nos. 39–41

The *Catechism's* teaching on the Incarnation is presented in numbers 456 to 478. The principal points are the following:

1. The Son of God became man for several reasons: to save us by reconciling us with God, to show us God's love, to be our model of holiness, and to make us partakers in the divine nature.
2. Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God from all eternity who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became man at a certain moment in history. He is one Person, the Son of God, with two natures, divine and human.

3. Along with a body, the Son of God assumed a rational, human soul.
4. Christ has a human intellect and will; these are perfectly attuned and subject to the divine intellect and will he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Youcat questions 72–79

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1114–16, 1378–81

Youcat questions 215–20

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What does Christ do today through the sacraments that he did in his human body two thousand years ago?
2. How does the mystery of Incarnation relate to our use of images in Catholic worship and devotion?¹
3. How can I deepen and express my awareness that Christ is truly present, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the Eucharist?

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2447–49

¹This subject is covered by CCC, nos. 1159, 1160, and 2132.

Youcat questions 449–51

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How did Christ identify with the poor in his lifetime? How did he help them?
2. How does he continue to do so today through us?²

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2599–2602, 2616

Youcat questions 474–77

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does Jesus provide us an example of prayer in his earthly life?
2. How do we express our faith in the doctrine of the Incarnation by praying to Christ?³
3. How do Catholic devotional practices express our faith in Christ as God and man?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: Jn 1:1–18]

Let us pray.

O God, Creator and Redeemer of human nature,

Who willed that your Word should take flesh

2. It might be helpful to consider each of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy individually.

3. Numbers 2665 to 2669 of CCC develop the theme of prayer to Jesus.

In an ever-virgin womb,
look with favor on our prayers,
that your Only Begotten Son,
having taken to himself our humanity,
may be pleased to grant us a share in his divinity.

Who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for December 17

SESSION FOUR

THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Reflection on the identity of Christ, and the ongoing experience of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church and in the life of each Christian, revealed the fundamental mystery of our faith: that the one eternal God is a communion of three Persons. The imprint of this “Being as Communion” is found everywhere: in the one Church as a communion of churches, but also in the conjugal union of husband and wife, in the family, and in the human race. Far from being a matter of abstract theological speculation, the Trinity is the key to our understanding everything that exists, and the pattern for our right living.

Biblical Reading: John 16:7–15

Background: The Teaching of the Church

The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. He did not abandon men after they had fallen in Adam, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer “who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature”. All the elect, before time began, the Father “foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren”. He planned to assemble in the

holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and “from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect”, will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.

The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things. To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself”. As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.

When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal. To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies. The Spirit dwells in the Church and

in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons. The Church, which the Spirit guides in the way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, "Come!"

Thus, the Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 2–4

The *Catechism's* teaching on the Holy Trinity is presented in numbers 238 to 260. The principal points are the following:

1. Jesus revealed that God is Father not simply as Creator; he is Father eternally in relation to his Son. The Son is "consubstantial" with the Father, sharing all the divine attributes, which he receives from the Father.
2. After Christ's glorification, the Holy Spirit was sent. He had shared in the work of creation and had spoken through the prophets, and is also consubstantial with the Father and the Son. With the sending of the Spirit, the fullness of the mystery of the Trinity is revealed.
3. The West professes that within the mystery of the Trinity the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; the East professes simply that the Spirit proceeds from the Father.
4. We do not profess three Gods, but one God in three Persons, who are really distinct from one another by virtue of their relations to one another.

5. The whole work of salvation is accomplished by the three Persons together, each exercising a unique role.
6. The ultimate goal of God's saving plan is the entry of all creatures into the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Youcat questions 35–39

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1082, 1083¹

Youcat question 170

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How is the dogma of the Trinity reflected in the texts of our Catholic liturgical prayers?
2. How is the proclamation of the word of God in the liturgy trinitarian?²
3. How does the Holy Spirit make present the mystery of Christ in the liturgy?³

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1701–5

Youcat question 280

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. The trinitarian nature of Christian worship is treated more extensively in CCC, nos. 1077–1109.

2. See CCC, no. 1101.

3. See CCC, nos. 1103–6, and the words anamnesis and epiclesis in the CCC's Glossary.

1. Men are made in the image and likeness of God; how is the mystery of the Trinity reflected in our human nature?
2. How is the mystery of the Holy Trinity reflected in human society? How should it be?⁴
3. How can the Christian family embody the mystery of the Trinity?⁵
4. How is the mystery of the Trinity expressed in the conjugal relationship between man and woman?⁶

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2664, 2670–72

Youcat questions 120, 495–96

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the Holy Spirit use the humanity of Jesus to teach us about prayer?
2. How does the Holy Spirit unite our personal prayer with the prayer of the Church?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: John 16:7–15]

Let us pray.

God our Father, who by sending into the world

the Word of truth and the Spirit of sanctification

4. See CCC, nos. 1878, 1905, 1934, 1935.

5. See CCC, nos. 2205, 2206.

6. See CCC, nos. 2333–35.

made known to the human race your wondrous mystery,
grant us, we pray, that in professing the true faith,
we may acknowledge the Trinity of eternal glory
and adore your Unity, powerful in majesty.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for Trinity Sunday

SESSION FIVE

THE CHURCH

Because the one God is a dynamic communion among the three Persons, our union in Christ is lived in the communion of the Church. Unity-in-diversity is expressed in our parish community, our local church gathered around the bishop, and in the worldwide communion of the Catholic Church. Our personal prayer, liturgical worship, and charitable service either builds up or diminishes the Church as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical Reading: Ephesians 4:4–16

Background: The Teaching of the Church

Christ, the one Mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as an entity with visible delineation through which He communicated truth and grace to all. But, the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element. For this reason, by no weak analogy, it is compared to the mystery of

the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body.

This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Savior, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which He erected for all ages as “the pillar and mainstay of the truth”. This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.

Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, “though He was by nature God . . . emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave”, and “being rich, became poor” for our sakes. Thus, the Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father “to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart”, “to seek and to save what was lost”. Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ. While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled, knew nothing of sin, but came to expiate only the sins of the people, the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. The Church, “like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God”, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until He comes. By the power of the risen Lord it is given strength

that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light.

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8

The *Catechism's* teaching on the Church is presented in numbers 758 to 865. The principal points are the following:

1. The Church is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity: born in the Father's heart, instituted by Christ, and revealed by the Holy Spirit.
2. She is both a visible and a spiritual reality, established by God as the sacrament of salvation for all people.
3. The Church is the priestly, prophetic, and royal People of God.
4. She is the Body of Christ, and his Bride.
5. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.
6. The Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

Youcat questions 121–37

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1118–20, 1124, 1136–41

Youcat questions 174–75, 179

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What does it mean to say that the Church herself is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit?
2. How do the variety of ministries and roles in the liturgy manifest the Church as the Body of Christ?¹
3. How does our parish celebration of the Eucharist unite us with the rest of our local church and the worldwide Catholic Church?²
4. How does our liturgical life manifest our communion with the Church in heaven?

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2030–32, 2037–40

Youcat questions 343–47

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does our moral life unite us to Christ's sacrifice, and so build up his Body, the Church?³
2. What is the relationship between the dictates of our conscience and the moral teachings of the Church?⁴
3. Along with our moral obligations as Christians, what are our specific duties as Catholics?⁵

1. CCC, nos. 1142–44, addresses this matter specifically.

2. There are a variety of liturgical traditions within the one Church (see CCC, nos. 1200–1203).

3. See CCC, nos. 2044–46.

4. CCC, nos. 1783–85, deals with the formation of conscience.

5. See "The Precepts of the Church", CCC, nos. 2041–43.

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2565, 2685, 2787–91

Youcat questions 469, 517

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does our personal prayer express and nourish our communion with Christ's Church?
2. What does it mean to call the family "the domestic Church"?
3. How does praying the Lord's Prayer express our communion with the Holy Trinity? With the Church? With all Christians?
4. How does our prayer unite us with all of mankind?⁶

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: Ephesians 4:4–16]

Let us pray.

O God, in the covenant of your Christ

you never cease to gather to yourself from all nations

a people growing together in unity through the Spirit;

grant, we pray, that your Church,

⁶ See CCC, nos. 2792–93.

faithful to the mission entrusted to her,
may continually go forward with the human family
and always be the leaven and the soul of human society,
to renew it in Christ and transform it
into the family of God.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for the Holy Church

SESSION SIX

THE POPE AND THE BISHOPS

Just as Jesus left us no written Scriptures, so he bequeathed us no manual for Church organization. What he did do was choose twelve men from among his disciples, and prepared them to lead his community when he returned to the Father. From among these Twelve, he chose one man, Peter, to serve as leader among the Twelve. For two thousand years, the Catholic Church has grown and spread throughout the world, but through the successors of the apostles, the college of bishops in union with the pope, she has maintained a unity in the essential teachings of faith and morals. Our pastors are the lynchpin connecting us to worldwide communion of the Church, and to that community stretching back over twenty centuries to Christ himself.

Biblical Readings: Matthew 28:16–20; John 21:15–17

Background: The Teaching of the Church

Christ the Lord, Son of the living God, came that He might save His people from their sins and that all men might be sanctified. Just as He Himself was sent by the Father, so He also sent His Apostles. Therefore, He sanctified them, conferring on them the Holy Spirit, so that they also might glorify the Father upon earth and save men, “to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12), which is the Church.

In this Church of Christ the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of His sheep and lambs, enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority over the care of souls by divine institution. Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, he is sent to provide for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, he holds a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.

The bishops themselves, however, having been appointed by the Holy Spirit, are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls. Together with the supreme pontiff and under his authority they are sent to continue throughout the ages the work of Christ, the eternal pastor. Christ gave the Apostles and their successors the command and the power to teach all nations, to hallow men in the truth, and to feed them. Bishops, therefore, have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith, pontiffs, and pastors through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them.

Bishops, sharing in the solicitude for all the churches, exercise this episcopal office of theirs, which they have received through episcopal consecration, in communion with and under the authority of the supreme pontiff. As far as their teaching authority and pastoral government are concerned, all are united in a college or body with respect to the universal Church of God.

They exercise this office individually in reference to the portions of the Lord's flock assigned to them, each one taking care of the particular church committed to him, or sometimes some of them jointly providing for certain common needs of various churches.

Second Vatican Council, Decree *Christus Dominus*, nos. 1–3

The *Catechism's* teaching on the role of the pope and bishops in the Church is presented in numbers 874 to 896. The principal points are the following:

1. Sacramental ministry is a service exercised in the name of Christ; it has a personal character and a collegial form.
2. Christ entrusted the leadership of his community to the twelve apostles, with Saint Peter as their leader. The college of bishops in union with its head, the Bishop of Rome, holds the place of the apostles in the Church.
3. As the successor of Peter, the pope is the visible source of unity of the worldwide Church. He has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church.
4. Individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular churches. They also exercise concern for other communities, and, as members of the college of bishops, they are responsible for the worldwide Church.
5. Christ endowed the apostles and their successors, in union with the pope, with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals.
6. Bishops exercise their office of sanctifying through the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, through their teaching, and by their prayer and example.
7. Bishops govern their particular churches in the name of Christ, in communion with the whole Church, under the leadership of the pope.

Youcat questions 140–44

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1555–61

Youcat questions 249–59

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the bishop function as the visible source and foundation of unity in his diocese? How does he promote communion between his particular church and the wider Catholic communion, both nationally and worldwide?
2. How are priests united to one another and to their bishop?¹ How are ordained ministers related to the rest of the baptized?²
3. As successors of the apostles, the bishops are true and authentic teachers of the faith. What is the relationship between this teaching office and the word of God?³

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2032–38

Youcat questions 344, 347

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How is “saving truth” related to moral living? What role do the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments play in our moral discernment?
2. Most papal and episcopal teaching is not presented as infallible. What should be our response as Catholics to the ordinary Magisterium of the Church?⁴
3. How can lay Catholics share the moral vision of our tradition with the wider society?⁵

1. CCC, nos. 1567 and 1568, speaks of this.

2. CCC, no. 1120, addresses this.

3. CCC, nos. 85–87 and 94–95, deals with the nature of the Magisterium of the Church.

4. Recall what CCC, no. 892, said on this matter.

5. See CCC, nos. 899 and 2442.

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2623, 2624, 2636

Youcat questions 486–87, 492

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How are the following mutually supportive: the apostles' teaching (carried out today by their successors), fellowship (of groups within our parish, diocese, and worldwide), Eucharist, and personal prayer?⁶
2. How can our communion in Christ find practical expression in our intercessory prayer?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: Matthew 28:16–20; John 21:15–17]

Let us pray.

O God, who care for your peoples with gentleness

and rule them in love,

endow with a spirit of wisdom

those to whom you have handed on authority to govern,

that your people may be led to know the truth more fully

and to grow in holiness according to your will.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

6. See CCC, no. 1369.

who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Collect, Mass for a Council or Synod

SESSION SEVEN

SACRED SCRIPTURE

We gather every Sunday to listen as a community to God's word. This celebration reminds us that the collection of inspired writings known as the Bible developed within the faith community over many centuries: the Old Testament in the time of Israel, the New Testament among the disciples of Jesus. The Scriptures preserve God's saving truth. In both their public proclamation and in our personal study, they teach us how God wants us to live and remind us of his great promises.

Biblical Readings: John 16:12–15; 2 Peter 1:19–21

Background: The Teaching of the Church

Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19–20, 3:15–16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers

and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted.

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation. Therefore “all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind” (2 Tim 3:16–17, Greek text).

However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words. ...The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith. It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature. For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which

carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, nos. 11–12

The *Catechism's* teaching on Sacred Scripture is presented in numbers 101 to 133. The principal points are the following:

1. The Church recognizes that the Bible is the word of God, and she venerates the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body.
2. God inspired the human authors, so that it can be truly said that he is the author of Sacred Scripture.
3. Scripture teaches without error that truth which God wished to present to us for the sake of our salvation.
4. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in the interpretation of Scripture. This understanding comes from an awareness of the human authors' intention and by attending to the content and unity of the whole Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church, and the coherence of individual truths within the whole plan of revelation.
5. The Church has discerned the canon of Scripture from the apostolic tradition.
6. The Old Testament is an indispensable part of the Bible.
7. There is an integral unity between the Old and New Testaments.

Youcat questions 14–19

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1093, 1094, 1100–1102

Youcat questions 180, 213

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the mystery of Christ invite us to give a “spiritual” reading to the Old Testament writings?¹
2. How does our Sunday Liturgy of the Word express the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?²
3. How do we express in the liturgy our veneration for Scripture as the word of God?³
4. In every sacramental celebration, there is a Liturgy of the Word. What is the relationship between the proclamation of the word and the action of sacramental celebration?⁴

1. CCC, no. 117, describes briefly different expressions of the spiritual sense.

2. Except for the Easter season, our First Reading each Sunday comes from the Old Testament and is chosen in light of that Sunday’s Gospel; if possible, it might be helpful to review briefly some of those readings in a missal or missalette.

3. See CCC, no. 1154.

4. See CCC, nos. 1153, 1155.

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1962, 1965–72

Youcat questions 333–36, 344

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the revelation of Christ give us a new way to interpret the Old Law?
2. What is the relationship between moral life taught to us in the Scriptures and the natural moral law?⁵
3. People interpret the moral teaching in the Bible in different ways. What role does the Magisterium play in this interpretation for us as Catholics?⁶

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2653–55, 2761–66

Youcat questions 491–92, 514

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How can our personal reading of Scripture and our participation in the Church's liturgy be mutually nourishing?
2. How are the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer related?
3. How can the Bible as a whole nourish our prayer?⁷

5. See CCC, nos. 1955, 1960.

6. See CCC, nos. 85–87.

7. CCC, nos. 2568–619, presents many exemplars of prayer in both the Old Testament and the New. This is perhaps too much material for a group discussion, but is deserving of personal study and reflection.

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: John 16:12–15; 2 Peter 1:19–21]

Let us pray.

Fulfill for us your gracious promise, O Lord, we pray,

so that by his coming

the Holy Spirit may make us witnesses before the world

to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ritual Mass for the Conferral of Confirmation

SESSION EIGHT

THE LIFE OF GRACE

Because the one God is a communion of three Persons, *salvation* and *redemption* are not abstract realities: through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we truly become the sisters and brothers of Christ, sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. This divine life unites us not only to God, but to the Church as well. The sacraments are privileged sources of grace, but our union with God is also nourished by our personal prayer and charity. The gift of God's love always respects our freedom; indeed, to the extent we welcome and respond to that love we grow in true freedom. Every day brings us many opportunities to deepen our divine union.

Biblical Readings: John 15:1-8; Romans 12:4-8

Background: The Teaching of the Church

For as St. Paul teaches, "all who are led by the Spirit of God" are "children of God." The filiation of divine adoption is born in man on the basis of the mystery of the Incarnation, therefore through Christ the eternal Son. But the birth, or rebirth, happens when God the Father "sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." Then "we receive a spirit of adopted sons by which we cry 'Abba, Father!'" Hence the divine filiation planted in the human soul through sanctifying grace is the work

of the Holy Spirit. "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." Sanctifying grace is the principle and source of man's new life: divine, supernatural life

... He who in the mystery of creation gives life to man and the cosmos in its many different forms, visible and invisible, again renews this life through the mystery of the Incarnation. Creation is thus completed by the Incarnation and since that moment is permeated by the powers of the Redemption, powers which fill humanity and all creation. This is what we are told by St. Paul, whose cosmic and theological vision seems to repeat the words of the ancient Psalm: creation "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God," that is, those whom God has "foreknown" and whom he "has predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." Thus there is a supernatural "adoption," of which the source is the Holy Spirit, love and gift. As such he is given to man. And in the superabundance of the uncreated gift there begins in the heart of all human beings that particular created gift whereby they "become partakers of the divine nature." Thus human life becomes permeated, through participation, by the divine life, and itself acquires a divine, supernatural dimension. There is granted the new life, in which as a sharer in the mystery of the Incarnation "man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit." Thus there is a close relationship between the Spirit who gives life and sanctifying grace and the manifold supernatural vitality which derives from it in man: between the uncreated Spirit and the created human spirit.

... But as we follow this reason for the Jubilee, we cannot limit ourselves to the two thousand years which have passed since the birth of Christ. We need to go further back, to embrace the whole of the action of the Holy Spirit even before Christ—from the beginning, throughout the world, and especially in the economy of the Old Covenant. For this action has been exercised, in every place and at every time, indeed in every individual, according to the eternal plan of salvation, whereby this action was to be closely linked with the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, which in its turn exercised its influence on those who believed

in the future coming of Christ. This is attested to especially in the Letter to the Ephesians. Grace, therefore, bears within itself both a Christological aspect and a pneumatological one, which becomes evident above all in those who expressly accept Christ: “In him [in Christ] you . . . were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it.”

But, still within the perspective of the great Jubilee, we need to look further and go further afield, knowing that “the wind blows where it wills,” according to the image used by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus. The Second Vatican Council, centered primarily on the theme of the Church, reminds us of the Holy Spirit’s activity also “outside the visible body of the Church.” The council speaks precisely of “all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery.”

John Paul II, Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, nos. 52–53

The *Catechism’s* teaching on grace is presented in numbers 1987 to 2011. The principal points are the following:

1. The first work of grace is conversion, which effects our justification.
2. Justification is merited by Christ’s death; it involves detachment from sin, acceptance of God’s righteousness, and our sanctification.
3. Grace is a participation in the divine life, introducing us into the intimacy of trinitarian communion.

4. Sanctifying, or deifying, grace is a habitual gift, our ongoing relationship with God.
5. Actual graces are God's interventions, both at the beginning of conversion and in our ongoing sanctification.
6. The preparation for us to receive grace is itself the work of grace.
7. God's free initiative calls for our free response. God's grace does not violate our freedom.
8. Along with graces for our personal sanctification, God gives graces to build up the whole Body of Christ. These are sacramental graces, charisms, and graces of state for different Christian vocations.
9. No one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, but we can merit graces which increase our sanctification. But our merits can never be separated from Christ, whose charity is the source of our merit.

Youcat questions 338–42

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1127–29, 1262–74

Youcat questions 173, 176, 178, 194–97

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. What is the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the sacraments, and how does this enable the sacraments to confer *ex opere operato* the grace they signify? Why, for believers, are the sacraments necessary for salvation?

2. How is the fruitfulness of a sacrament affected by the disposition of the person receiving it?
3. How are justification, the forgiveness of sins, and new birth related in the sacrament of baptism?
4. Why are some sacraments (baptism, confirmation, holy orders) not repeated?¹

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1742, 1810–13, 1830–32

Youcat questions 290, 305, 310–11

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. Why is freedom essential for our relationship with God? How does grace, far from rivaling our freedom, actually enhance it?²
2. How are the human virtues and the theological virtues related?³
3. How do the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit sustain and perfect our moral life?

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2565, 2608–11, 2656–58, 2745, 2814

Youcat questions 469, 477, 510, 517–19

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. The *Catechism's* treatment of each sacrament gives a description of the particular grace of that sacrament.

2. In this context, it might be helpful to reflect on the doctrine of original sin; see CCC, nos. 396, 407.

3. The *Catechism* treats each of the four cardinal virtues and the three theological virtues explicitly, but for discussion, see at least CCC, nos. 1827, 1828.

1. How does prayer nourish our communion with the Holy Trinity?⁴
2. How does prayer nurture our ongoing conversion and express our filial relationship with God? The growth of the theological virtues?
3. How does our prayer life not only deepen our holiness and build up the Body of Christ, but also make God's holiness more present in the world?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: John 15:1–8; Romans 12:4–8]

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,

whom, taught by the Holy Spirit,

we dare to call our Father,

bring, we pray, to perfection in our hearts

the spirit of adoption as your sons and daughters,

that we may merit to enter into the inheritance

which you have promised.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

Who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

4. CCC, nos. 2664–72, speaks of our relationship in prayer to each Person of the Trinity.

SESSION NINE

THE SACRAMENTS

One of the greatest manifestations of the risen Christ is found in the sacramental life of the Church. Through the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus does today what he did twenty centuries ago: he sanctifies, heals, feeds, teaches and forgives his people. The sacraments give us divine grace at the key moments of our life, as well as in our day-to-day pilgrimage to God. Our active participation in the sacramental life of the Church is a litmus test for the vitality of our faith.

Biblical Readings: Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 2:36–42

Background: The Teaching of the Church

To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross”, but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

Christ indeed always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is His beloved Bride

who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father.

Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.

From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree. . . .

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God; because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called “sacraments of faith.” They do indeed impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God duly, and to practice charity.

It is therefore of the highest importance that the faithful should easily understand the sacramental signs, and should frequent with great eagerness those sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life.

Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 59

The *Catechism's* teaching on the sacraments in general is presented in numbers 1113 to 1130. The principal points are the following:

1. Christ instituted seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony.
2. The Church herself is the sacrament of Christ's continuing action through the mission

of the Holy Spirit. The seven sacraments are expressions of the spiritual life of the Body of Christ, and cannot be understood properly apart from the Church.

3. Christ acts through ordained ministers, who tie the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and ultimately to the words and actions of Christ.
4. The sacraments presuppose, nourish, and express faith.
5. Because Christ himself acts in the sacraments, they unfailingly confer the grace they signify. The dispositions of the recipient can increase or decrease the fruitfulness of that grace. Three sacraments (baptism, confirmation, holy orders) confer a sacramental character, and so are not repeated.

Youcat questions 172–78

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1145, 1151–55, 1158, 1204–6

Youcat questions 181–83, 192

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. How is the “harmony of signs” (words, actions, song, music, images) expressed in the liturgy? How do we determine what is the unchangeable core of each sacrament, and what parts can be adapted to various cultures?
2. How is the idea that the ordained minister links the worshipping community to the apostles and so to Christ related to the doctrine of apostolic succession?¹
3. How do our shared words and signs unite us with the Church throughout the world?

1. See CCC, nos. 861 and 1087.

How does the liturgy manifest our communion with the saints?²

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2014, 2111, 2120, 2179–82

Youcat questions 187, 358, 365–66

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How can the external signs and words of the sacraments deepen our intimate union with God?
2. How can these external signs, when separated from proper interior dispositions, lead to superstition or sacrilege?
3. Why do we keep holy the Lord's Day by gathering to celebrate the Eucharist? What is the place of the parish community in our sacramental life?

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2559–65

Youcat questions 469–70, 497–98

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How is the dynamic of our search for God and God's search for us lived out in our liturgical and personal prayer?³
2. How do the sacraments celebrate our covenant and communion with God and with the rest of the Church?

2. See CCC, nos. 1138, 1139, and 1161.

3. See CCC, no. 2655.

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 2:36–42]

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,

who have restored us to life

by the blessed Death and Resurrection of your Christ,

preserve in us the work of your mercy,

that, by partaking of this mystery,

we may have a life unceasingly devoted to you.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer after Communion on Good Friday

SESSION TEN

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Writing about the Eucharist many centuries ago, Saint Augustine said: “God, who can do all things, can do no more than this; God, who knows all things, knows nothing greater to give us.” The fact that the Eucharist is celebrated on every great occasion, and indeed is also “our daily bread” throughout the week, suggests how central the Eucharist is to our lives as Catholics. Like the gift of life itself, it is so close to us that it is easy to take this great sacrament for granted. Saint Thomas called it the greatest of Jesus’ miracles, and it is ours for the asking.

Biblical Readings: John 6:51–58; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17

Background: The Teaching of the Church

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift—however precious—among so many others, but as the gift *par excellence*, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since “all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times”.

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and

resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and “the work of our redemption is carried out”. This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits. This is the faith from which generations of Christians down the ages have lived. The Church’s Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed this faith with joyful gratitude for its inestimable gift. I wish once more to recall this truth and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, he shows us a love which goes “to the end” (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.

Christ’s passover includes not only his passion and death, but also his resurrection. This is recalled by the assembly’s acclamation following the consecration: “*We proclaim your resurrection*”. The Eucharistic Sacrifice makes present not only the mystery of the Saviour’s passion and death, but also the mystery of the resurrection which crowned his sacrifice. It is as the living and risen One that Christ can become in the Eucharist the “bread of life” (Jn 6:35, 48), the “living bread” (Jn 6:51). Saint Ambrose reminded the newly-initiated that the Eucharist applies the event of the resurrection to their lives: “Today Christ is yours, yet each day he rises again for you”. Saint Cyril of Alexandria also makes clear that sharing in the sacred mysteries “is a true confession and a remembrance that the Lord died and returned to life for us and on our behalf”.

The sacramental re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass involves a most special presence which—in the words of Paul VI—“is called ‘real’ not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were ‘not real’, but because it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present”. ... Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei*, a mystery which surpasses our understanding and can only be received in faith, as is often brought out in the catechesis of the Church Fathers regarding this divine sacrament: “Do not see—Saint Cyril of Jerusalem exhorts—in

the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are his body and his blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise”.

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, we shall continue to sing with the Angelic Doctor. Before this mystery of love, human reason fully experiences its limitations.

John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos. 11, 14, 15

The *Catechism's* teaching on the Eucharist is presented in numbers 1356 to 1381. The principal points are the following:

1. The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise to the Father, offered through and with Christ.
2. The Eucharist is a sacrifice because it makes present the mystery of the Cross and applies the fruits of that sacrifice.
3. The sacrifice on Calvary and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one sacrifice; the Church, as the Body of Christ, participates in Christ's self-offering.
4. The whole Church takes part in this offering, including the saints and the faithful departed.
5. By the power of Christ's word and the work of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ; he is truly, really, and substantially present.
6. Because the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ, it is fitting to worship Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

Youcat questions 208–13

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1348–55, 1391–1405

Youcat questions 217–23

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How are the constitutive elements of the Eucharist (thanksgiving, memorial, sacrifice) manifested in each of the various parts of the Mass: Liturgy of the Word, Offertory, Eucharistic Prayer, Communion?
2. How does the Eucharistic celebration express and deepen our communion with...
 - ...the rest of the Church on earth?¹
 - ...the saints in Heaven?²
 - ...the faithful departed?³
3. How does the Eucharist give us a foretaste of the banquet of eternal life in Heaven, and express our faith in the resurrection of the body?⁴

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2443–49, 2544–47

Youcat questions 449–51, 467–68

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. See CCC, nos. 752, 1140.
2. See CCC, nos. 957, 1173.
3. See CCC, nos. 958, 1689.
4. See CCC, nos. 1000, 1130.

1. How is Christ's own solidarity with the poor manifested in his saving sacrifice made present in the Mass, and his Real Presence under the forms of bread and wine?
2. How does our communion with the poor find expression in the celebration of the Eucharist? How does our reception of Holy Communion and our prayer before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament help us in our service to the poor?
3. How does the Eucharist nurture our own poverty of heart?

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2770–72, 2828–37

Youcat questions 522–23

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the celebration of the Eucharist embody the diverse elements of Christian prayer found in the Lord's Prayer?
2. How does the Eucharist manifest our reliance on God to give us all that we need? How does it impel us to greater charity in sharing his blessings with others?
3. What various facets of the request that God "give us this day our daily bread" are reflected in frequent, even daily, celebration of the Eucharist?⁵

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: John 6:51–58; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17]

5. See CCC, nos. 2659 and 2660, for more reflection on "today".

Let us pray.

O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament
have left us a memorial of your Passion,
grant us, we pray,
so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood
that we may always experience in ourselves
the fruits of your redemption.

Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, Solemnity of Corpus Christi

SESSION ELEVEN

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Because we live in the risen Christ, we are one not only with believers throughout the world, but with those who have gone before us in faith. Love is stronger than death, and our communion with Christ unites us to the saints in Heaven and those who are undergoing their final purification before entering into the banquet of eternal life. Our devotion to the saints and our concern for the souls in Purgatory are hallmarks of a religion that is truly “catholic” (universal)—not only in terms of space, but in terms of time.

Biblical Readings: Ephesians 2:17–22; Hebrews 12:1–2

Background: The Teaching of the Church

Until the Lord shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him and death being destroyed, all things are subject to Him, some of His disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are purified, and others are in glory beholding “clearly God Himself triune and one, as He is”; but all in various ways and degrees are in communion in the same charity of God and neighbor and all sing the same hymn of glory to our God. For all who are in Christ, having His Spirit, form one Church and cleave together in Him. Therefore the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least weakened

or interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the perpetual faith of the Church, is strengthened by communication of spiritual goods. For by reason of the fact that those in heaven are more closely united with Christ, they establish the whole Church more firmly in holiness, lend nobility to the worship which the Church offers to God here on earth and in many ways contribute to its greater edification. For after they have been received into their heavenly home and are present to the Lord, through Him and with Him and in Him they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, showing forth the merits which they won on earth through the one Mediator between God and man, serving God in all things and filling up in their flesh those things which are lacking of the sufferings of Christ for His Body which is the Church. Thus by their brotherly interest our weakness is greatly strengthened.

Fully conscious of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the pilgrim Church from the very first ages of the Christian religion has cultivated with great piety the memory of the dead, and "because it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins", also offers suffrages for them. The Church has always believed that the apostles and Christ's martyrs who had given the supreme witness of faith and charity by the shedding of their blood, are closely joined with us in Christ, and she has always venerated them with special devotion, together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels. The Church has piously implored the aid of their intercession. To these were soon added also those who had more closely imitated Christ's virginity and poverty, and finally others whom the outstanding practice of the Christian virtues and the divine charisms recommended to the pious devotion and imitation of the faithful....

Our union with the Church in heaven is put into effect in its noblest manner especially in the sacred Liturgy, wherein the power of the Holy Spirit acts upon us through sacramental signs. Then, with combined rejoicing we celebrate together the praise of the divine majesty; then all those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and gathered

together into one Church, with one song of praise magnify the one and triune God. Celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice therefore, we are most closely united to the Church in heaven in communion with and venerating the memory first of all of the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, of Blessed Joseph and the blessed apostles and martyrs and of all the saints. . . .

For all of us, who are sons of God and constitute one family in Christ, as long as we remain in communion with one another in mutual charity and in one praise of the most holy Trinity, are corresponding with the intimate vocation of the Church and partaking in foretaste the liturgy of consummate glory. For when Christ shall appear and the glorious resurrection of the dead will take place, the glory of God will light up the heavenly City and the Lamb will be the lamp thereof. Then the whole Church of the saints in the supreme happiness of charity will adore God and “the Lamb who was slain”, proclaiming with one voice: “To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb blessing, and honor, and glory, and dominion forever and ever”.

Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 49–51

The *Catechism's* teaching on the communion of saints is presented in numbers 946 to 959. The principal points are the following:

1. The phrase “communion of saints” refers to a sharing in holy things and a sharing among holy persons.
2. The communion is a sharing in faith, the sacraments, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and charity.
3. This communion includes those who have died: the saints, who help us by their example and intercession, and the faithful departed, whom we can assist by our prayers.

Youcat question 146

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1137, 1138, 1369–72, 1474–77

Youcat questions 179, 217, 236–37

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How do we express our communion with the saints in Heaven and the faithful departed in the liturgy?¹
2. How is the mystery of the communion of saints expressed in our own reconciliation when we sin, and in the assistance we can give one another in purifying ourselves of the effects of sin?²

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1905–12, 1939–42

Youcat questions 327–28

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. See CCC, nos. 1172 and 1173, for the “sanctoral cycle” in the liturgical year, and CCC, no. 1161, regarding images of the saints.
2. See CCC, no. 1469, regarding reconciliation with the Church.

1. How does our life in the communion of saints help us to seek the common good in society?
2. How can we in the communion of the Church share both temporal and spiritual benefits with the wider world?³

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2683, 2684, 2790–93, 2839–45

Youcat questions 497, 517

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How do the example and spiritual teachings of the saints assist us?⁴
2. How do the words “Our Father” express our communion with other Christians? How do they obligate us toward those outside the Church?
3. How do we experience communion in asking for and receiving forgiveness?

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: Ephesians 2:17–22; Hebrews 12:1–2]

Let us pray.

O God, fount of all holiness

make us each walk worthily in our vocation,

3. See CCC, nos. 2044–46, regarding moral life and missionary witness.

4. See CCC, nos. 931–33, on consecration and mission.

through the intercession of your Saints,
on whom you bestowed
a great variety of graces on earth
and a single glorious reward in heaven.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, Votive Mass for All Saints

SESSION TWELVE

MARY, MOTHER OF CHRIST AND MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

When the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples at Pentecost, they were gathered in prayer around Mary, the Mother of the Lord. And for two thousand years, that is where we have stayed: Jesus gave us his Mother to be our Mother with his dying breath, and we have received her as a model of faith, an example of hope, and a source of maternal love. It is said that when someone ceases to love her, he ceases to be Catholic.

Biblical Readings: Luke 1:39–45; John 19:26–27

Background: The Teaching of the Church

The Second Vatican Council prepares us for this by presenting in its teaching the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and of the Church. If it is true, as the Council itself proclaims, that “only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light,” then this principle must be applied in a very particular way to that exceptional “daughter of the human race,” that extraordinary “woman” who became the Mother of Christ. Only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully made clear. Thus has the Church sought to interpret it from the very beginning: the mystery of the Incarnation has enabled her to penetrate and to make ever clearer the mystery of the Mother of the Incarnate Word. The Council of Ephesus

(431) was of decisive importance in clarifying this, for during that Council, to the great joy of Christians, the truth of the divine motherhood of Mary was solemnly confirmed as a truth of the Church's faith. . . . Thus, through the mystery of Christ, on the horizon of the Church's faith there shines in its fullness the mystery of his Mother. In turn, the dogma of the divine motherhood of Mary was for the Council of Ephesus and is for the Church like a seal upon the dogma of the Incarnation, in which the Word truly assumes human nature into the unity of his person, without cancelling out that nature.

The Second Vatican Council, by presenting Mary in the mystery of Christ, also finds the path to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church. Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is in a particular way united with the Church, "which the Lord established as his own body." ...The reality of the Incarnation finds a sort of extension in the mystery of the Church—the Body of Christ. And one cannot think of the reality of the Incarnation without referring to Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word.

In these reflections, however, I wish to consider primarily that "pilgrimage of faith" in which "the Blessed Virgin advanced," faithfully preserving her union with Christ. In this way the "twofold bond" which unites the Mother of God with Christ and with the Church takes on historical significance. Nor is it just a question of the Virgin Mother's life-story, of her personal journey of faith and "the better part" which is hers in the mystery of salvation; it is also a question of the history of the whole People of God, of all those who take part in the same "pilgrimage of faith." The Council expresses this when it states in another passage that Mary "has gone before," becoming "a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ." This "going before" as a figure or model is in reference to the intimate mystery of the Church, as she actuates and accomplishes her own saving mission by uniting in herself—as Mary did—the qualities of mother and virgin. She is a virgin who "keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse" and "becomes herself a mother," for "she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God." ...

The Council emphasizes that the Mother of God is already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church: “In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27)”; and at the same time the Council says that “the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin, and so they raise their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues.” The pilgrimage of faith no longer belongs to the Mother of the Son of God: glorified at the side of her Son in heaven, Mary has already crossed the threshold between faith and that vision which is “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). At the same time, however, in this eschatological fulfillment, Mary does not cease to be the “Star of the Sea” (Maris Stella) for all those who are still on the journey of faith.

John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, nos. 4–6

The *Catechism's* teaching on Mary as the Mother of Christ is presented in numbers 487 to 507. The principal points are the following:

1. From all eternity, Mary was predestined to be the Mother of Christ.
2. Mary was redeemed from the moment of her conception.
3. Because the child she conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit is truly the eternal Son of God, Mary is truly the Mother of God.
4. Mary conceived as a virgin, gave birth as a virgin, and remained a virgin.
5. At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and perfect realization of the Church.

Youcat questions 180–84

The *Catechism's* teaching on Mary as Mother of the Church is presented in numbers 964 to 972. The principal points are the following:

1. Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ, and flows from it.
2. Her Assumption is an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.
3. Mary is a model of faith and charity, and our Mother in the order of grace.
4. Devotion to Mary is an integral part of Catholic life.
5. Mary in glory is an eschatological icon of the Church.

Youcat questions 85, 147–49

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1104–9, 1612–20

Youcat questions 117, 265

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does the role of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy relate to the Incarnation of the Son of God?¹
2. How does Mary serve as a model for both marriage and the single life as forms of discipleship?

1. CCC, nos. 721–26, speaks of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Mary.

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 2221–28, 2232, 2233, 2348–50

Youcat questions 372–75, 404–6

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does Mary, in her relationship with her Son, provide a model for parents? How does she also model the priority of following Jesus even over the ties of family?
2. How does Mary embody a positive, integrated understanding of chastity?²

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2617–19, 2673–79

Youcat questions 479–80

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does Mary, as she appears to us in the pages of the Bible, provide us with an example of faith in prayer?
2. How do our prayers to Mary express our praise to God for what he has done for her, and through her for all of us, and our confidence that she prays for us and cares for us as our Mother?

2. See CCC, nos. 2517–19, for a reflection on “purity of heart”.

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Readings: Luke 1:39–45; John 19:26–27]

Let us pray.

O God, who, looking on the lowliness

of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

raised her to this grace,

that your Only Begotten Son was born of her

according to the flesh

and that she was crowned on this day with surpassing glory,

grant through her prayers,

that, saved by the mystery of your redemption,

we may merit to be exalted by you on high.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption

SESSION THIRTEEN

LIFE EVERLASTING

The great river of Catholic dogma began to flow at Easter, when the crucified Lord was raised up in glory. The reason he died was that we might have life—and a life far beyond anything we can experience here on earth. The “living Gospel” first preached by the apostles, and witnessed to by the Church in every age, carries us on the stream of divine life to the glory of Heaven, our true home. In every Mass, just before we receive Holy Communion, we recall that we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Biblical Reading: Revelation 21:1–8

Background: The Teaching of the Church

We do not know the time for the consummation of the earth and of humanity, nor do we know how all things will be transformed. As deformed by sin, the shape of this world will pass away; but we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling place and a new earth where justice will abide, and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all the longings for peace which spring up in the human heart. Then, with death overcome, the sons of God will be raised up in Christ, and what was sown in weakness and corruption will be invested with incorruptibility. Enduring

with charity and its fruits, all that creation which God made on man's account will be unchained from the bondage of vanity.

Therefore, while we are warned that it profits a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose himself, the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age.

Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.

For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: "a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace." On this earth that Kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower.

Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 39

The *Catechism's* teaching on the resurrection of the body is presented in numbers 988 to 1014. The principal points are the following:

1. Belief in our resurrection, body and soul, has been an essential part of the Christian faith from its very beginning.
2. All the dead will rise in their own spiritual bodies at the last day.
3. Death is the end of earthly life, and is the consequence of sin.

4. Death is transformed by Christ into the way to eternal life. To rise with Christ, we must die with him.

Youcat questions 152–55

The *Catechism's* teaching on eternal life is presented in numbers 1020 to 1050. The principal points are the following:

1. Each individual is judged at the end of life.
2. Those who die in God's grace and are perfectly purified live forever in Heaven. This is perfect life in the loving communion of the Holy Trinity, together with all the blessed.
3. Those who die in God's grace, but who still carry the effects of sin and selfishness with them undergo a final purification before entering into communion with the Holy Trinity.
4. Those who die in a state of revolt against God exclude themselves from communion with God forever, to their eternal misery.
5. When Christ returns at the end of the time, there will be the Last Judgment all of mankind.
6. At Christ's return, the whole of creation will be transformed.

Youcat questions 156–64

Implications and Applications

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery

Read CCC, nos. 1137–39, 1523–25, 1680–90

Youcat questions 179, 245–47, 278

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How do the sacraments given to the dying (penance, anointing of the sick, Viaticum) relate to the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist)?
2. How do the Church's funeral rites profess her faith in the saving power of Christ's death and Resurrection? How do they assist the deceased?
3. How do our prayers, images, and music remind us of the connection between our liturgy and the heavenly liturgy?¹

Life in Christ

Read CCC, nos. 1731–34, 1817–21, 2052–54

Youcat questions 287, 308, 348

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does Christ himself and the Law of the Gospel help us to interpret the commandments that lead to eternal life?²
2. How does our exercise of the gift of freedom determine our eternal destiny?³
3. How does our hope for eternal life deepen our union with Christ? How does it shape our moral actions?

1. See also CCC, nos. 1090, 2642.

2. See CCC, no. 1968.

3. See CCC, no. 1861, on mortal sin; no. 2011, on merit; and no. 2016, on final perseverance.

Christian Prayer

Read CCC, nos. 2848–56

Youcat questions 525–27

Questions for reflection or discussion:

1. How does prayer help us make the right choices, and assist us when we do not?
2. How does our own struggle against evil, and that of the whole Church, unite us with the mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection?⁴
3. How does our prayer nurture our awareness that we already share in Christ's victory?⁵

Concluding Prayer

[Biblical Reading: Revelation 21:1–8]

Let us pray.

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

4. See CCC, nos. 675–77, regarding the Church's ultimate trial.

5. See CCC, nos. 1003, 2796.

who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect, First Sunday of Advent

APPENDIX

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

The history of English translations of the Bible is a fascinating subject, but it is not possible to do it justice here. My intention is simply to consider several of the translations available today, and to indicate something of the characteristics of each. To the question, “Which translation of the Bible should I use?” there is, I think, no single answer. Partly, it is a matter of “use for *what?*” Some translations may be more helpful for study, others more conducive to prayer. And personal taste enters into the issue, as well: our preferences will lead us to gravitate toward one translation or another. Every translation is an interpretation, which means that it would be helpful to have several different Bibles on your bookshelf; even when you settle on your favorite, it is good to read the others from time to time. Having different versions can keep us from getting into a rut.

There are literally dozens of English translations of the Bible available today, but until the middle of the twentieth century the matter was much simpler: Catholics had the Douay-Rheims version; Protestants had the King James (or Authorized) version. A word about each of these is in order: both are still readily available, and many people find their “Bible English” appealing. They were undertaken in the tumultuous days of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic response to it, and they bear the marks of their origin. The Douay-Rheims translation of the New Testament was published in 1582, its Old Testament about thirty years later. The work was undertaken by English Catholic refugees in France (hence the name), and what they produced was an English translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible. The Council of Trent had proclaimed the Vulgate to be the authoritative text for Catholic use, so it was natural that the recusants would use it as the basis for their translation. This also explains one of the characteristics of this version: many “latinate” words in English. In 1750, Bishop Challoner undertook a substantial revision of

the “Douay-Rheims”; even though it continued to be designated by this name, it was in fact practically a new translation. The “King James” Bible was published by the Church of England in 1611. Unlike the Douay, it was a translation from the Greek and Hebrew, not the Latin.

These two translations reflect the family feud from which they emerged. Both versions have a certain polemical edge to them, to some extent in the translations themselves, and more so in the explanatory notes. The Protestant Authorized Version throws off the shackles of Rome by jettisoning the Latin version and getting back to the original languages; yet biblical scholars note that in fact the Greek texts used were very late (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries), and that the Vulgate drew on much older texts. And, there is a certain cross-pollination: the creators of the King James Bible used the Douay New Testament, and Challoner’s revision of the Douay was in turn influenced by the Authorized Version.

These two Bibles share two limitations that we should keep in mind when reading them today. First, although they drew on the best scholarship and texts available at the time, the intervening three-hundred-plus years have brought to light a great number of biblical manuscripts, and growth in our understanding of the culture of ancient Israel. Secondly, the English language is a living reality, and words change meanings. So, along with knowing something about ancient Israel we also need to know something about seventeenth-century English when reading these translations. The awareness of these limitations prompted the creation of new English translations in the twentieth century.

This spate of translations appeared in two waves. The first wave, from roughly 1940 to 1970, saw the emergence of radical revisions of older versions, or completely new English translations altogether. The second wave, from roughly 1980 to the end of the century, saw new versions of these translations appear. These new versions reflected advances in biblical studies, but also the struggle surrounding the issue of what is popularly referred to as “inclusive language”. While these newer versions tended (with some notable exceptions) to avoid what is called “vertical inclusiveness” (that is, referring to God as he/she, for example), they have tried to a greater or lesser extent to accommodate “horizontal inclusiveness” (that is, avoiding terms like “mankind” when men and women

are both meant, or using “one” or “they” instead of “he”). With this broad context in mind, let us look at several English translations of the Bible.

The New American Bible. I begin with this translation because it is the “official” American Catholic version, which means it is the one you will hear proclaimed at Mass in the United States. Back in 1941, the American bishops published the “Confraternity New Testament”, which was a reworking of Challoner’s revision of the Douay-Rheims Bible. Originally, the intent was to produce a similar revision of Challoner’s Old Testament, but then in the 1940s, the Holy See gave permission for vernacular translations to be made from the original Greek and Hebrew, rather than the Latin Vulgate. (A word might be said here about Ronald Knox’ translation of the Bible, which came out from the late 1940s to the early 1950s: it was a completely new English translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible.) From 1952 to 1970, American Catholic scholars, aided by others, worked on a new English translation of the Bible from the original languages. In 1987, a second edition was published, with a significantly revised New Testament. The revision of the Old Testament is nearing completion. A useful edition for study purposes is *The Catholic Study Bible*, ed. Donald Senior (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

The Revised Standard Version. In 1952, a group of American Protestant scholars, under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, published a significant revision of the King James Bible. (Note: In 1982, a different group published *The New King James Bible*, which simply changed some of the antiquated language of the *KJV*.) In 1966, a Catholic edition was produced that made a few changes in the New Testament, some of which were incorporated into the second edition of the Protestant *RSV* published in 1971. In 1990, a revision was published, *The New Revised Standard Version*. This translation has less “Bible English” than the earlier version, and shows greater concern to employ inclusive language. It also contains a few writings found in Eastern Orthodox Bibles, but not in the Catholic or Protestant canons. For study purposes, a useful edition is *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael Coogan, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); this work goes to great lengths to avoid any kind of denominational favoritism. Many share the opinion of the eminent biblical scholar Raymond Brown that the *NRSV* is a less literal translation than the *RSV*, and accordingly favor the former. One

significant example of this is found in a work which is extremely helpful for combining Bible study and Catholic doctrine: *The Navarre Bible New Testament: Expanded Edition* (Four Courts/Scepter Press, 2008). This is a reworking of an earlier commentary produced by Opus Dei; Old Testament commentaries are also available. Along with the RSV, these volumes provide the new Latin Vulgate text, as well as a wealth of commentaries from the Fathers of the Church and documents of the Magisterium.

The Jerusalem Bible. From 1948 to 1954, the French Dominicans of Jerusalem produced a translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek, with copious notes. This was translated into English in 1966. *The New Jerusalem Bible* was published in 1985; it draws on the revised version of the *JB* published in French in 1973 and shows less dependence on the French text than the earlier translation. The great advantage of the *NJB* is to be found in the footnotes and the many cross-references given in the biblical text.

Other Translations. Mention should also be made of *The New English Bible*, which was published in 1970 in England. Unlike the RSV, this was a completely new translation, not a revision of the King James Bible. This was the favorite translation of Fulton Sheen, who was no stranger to the felicities of good language. The *NEB* was reworked and issued as *The Revised English Bible* in 1989. Finally, there is *The Good News Bible*, also known as *Today's English Version*. The origin of this translation was requests from African and Asian Christians for whom English was a second language: they wanted a version of the Scriptures in simple, modern English; the most recent edition was published in 2001. This translation has been widely diffused and is the least expensive to purchase. While at times it can be considered inaccurate (it has been criticized for making passages that are obscure in the original too understandable in English!), its freshness can provide useful insights.

While I have presented the more significant translations of the Bible available to Catholics today, I have not exhausted the list. And there are many resources available for Bible study today, whether for a group or an individual. Your own temperament and needs will help you in your choice of translations, but I repeat what I said at the beginning of this short essay: by all means pick your favorite(s), but also read other versions from time to time. This will help produce fresh inspiration when reading the word of God.

