

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

PROLOGUE

“FATHER,... this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” [1]

“God our Saviour desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” [2]

“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” [3] - than the name of JESUS.

[1](#) Jn 17 3

[2](#) 1 Tim 2:3-4.

[3](#) Acts 4:12

I. The life of man - to know and love God

1 God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Saviour. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

2 So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” [4] Strengthened by this mission, the apostles “went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.” [5]

3 Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer. [6]

[4](#) Mt 28:19-20

[5](#) Mk 16:20

[6](#) Cf. Acts 2:42

II. Handing on the Faith: Catechesis

4 Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. [[7](#)]

5 “Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.” [[8](#)]

6 While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. [[9](#)]

7 “Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis.” [[10](#)]

8 Periods of renewal in the Church are also intense moments of catechesis. In the great era of the Fathers of the Church, saintly bishops devoted an important part of their ministry to catechesis. St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and many other Fathers wrote catechetical works that remain models for us. [[11](#)]

9 “The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the councils. the Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the Roman Catechism, which is also known by the name of that council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching. . . “ [[12](#)] The Council of Trent initiated a remarkable organization of the Church's catechesis. Thanks to the work of holy bishops and theologians such as St. Peter Canisius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Turibius of Mongrovejo or St. Robert Bellarmine, it occasioned the publication of numerous catechisms.

10 It is therefore no surprise that catechesis in the Church has again attracted attention in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope Paul VI considered the great catechism of modern times. the General Catechetical Directory (1971) the sessions of the Synod of Bishops devoted to evangelization (1974) and catechesis (1977), the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) and *Catechesi tradendae* (1979), attest to this. the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 asked “that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed” [[13](#)] The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, made the Synod's wish

his own, acknowledging that “this desire wholly corresponds to a real need of the universal Church and of the particular Churches.” [14] He set in motion everything needed to carry out the Synod Fathers' wish.

[7](#) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* 1; 2.

[8](#) CT 18.

[9](#) CT 18.

[10](#) CT 13.

[11](#) Cf. CT 12.

[12](#) CT 13.

[13](#) Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985,. Final Report II B a, 4.

[14](#) John Paul II, Discourse at the Closing of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 7 December 1985: AAS 78, (1986).

III. The Aim and Intended Readership of the Catechism

11 This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve “as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries”. [15]

12 This work is intended primarily for those responsible for catechesis: first of all the bishops, as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. It is offered to them as an instrument in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching the People of God. Through the bishops, it is addressed to redactors of catechisms, to priests, and to catechists. It will also be useful reading for all other Christian faithful.

[15](#) Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985, Final Report II B a, 4.

IV. Structure of this Catechism

13 The plan of this catechism is inspired by the great tradition of catechisms which build catechesis on four pillars: the baptismal profession of faith (the Creed), the sacraments of faith, the life of faith (the Commandments), and the prayer of the believer (the Lord's Prayer).

Part One: the Profession of Faith

14 Those who belong to Christ through faith and Baptism must confess their baptismal faith before men. [16] First therefore the Catechism expounds revelation, by which God addresses and gives himself to man, and the faith by which man responds to God (Section One). the profession

of faith summarizes the gifts that God gives man: as the Author of all that is good; as Redeemer; and as Sanctifier. It develops these in the three chapters on our baptismal faith in the one God: the almighty Father, the Creator; his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (Section Two).

Part Two: the Sacraments of Faith

15 The second part of the Catechism explains how God's salvation, accomplished once for all through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, is made present in the sacred actions of the Church's liturgy (Section One), especially in the seven sacraments (Section Two).

Part Three: the Life of Faith

16 The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it - through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God's law and grace (Section One), and through conduct that fulfils the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God's Ten Commandments (Section Two).

Part Four: Prayer in the Life of Faith

17 The last part of the Catechism deals with the meaning and importance of prayer in the life of believers (Section One). It concludes with a brief commentary on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer (Section Two), for indeed we find in these the sum of all the good things which we must hope for, and which our heavenly Father wants to grant us.

[16](#) Cf. Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9

V. Practical Directions for Using this Catechism

18 This catechism is conceived as an organic presentation of the Catholic faith in its entirety. It should be seen therefore as a unified whole. Numerous cross-references in the margin of the text (numbers found at the end of a sentence referring to other paragraphs that deal with the same theme), as well as the analytical index at the end of the volume, allow the reader to view each theme in its relationship with the entirety of the faith.

19 The texts of Sacred Scripture are often not quoted word for word but are merely indicated by a reference (cf.). For a deeper understanding of such passages, the reader should refer to the Scriptural texts themselves. Such Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis.

20 The use of small print in certain passages indicates observations of an historical or apologetic nature, or supplementary doctrinal explanations.

21 The quotations, also in small print, from patristic, liturgical, magisterial or hagiographical sources, are intended to enrich the doctrinal presentations. These texts have often been chosen with a view to direct catechetical use.

22 At the end of each thematic unit, a series of brief texts in small italics sums up the essentials of that unit's teaching in condensed formulae. These "IN BRIEF" summaries may suggest to local catechists brief summary formulae that could be memorized.

VI. Necessary Adaptations

23 The Catechism emphasizes the exposition of doctrine. It seeks to help deepen understanding of faith. In this way it is oriented towards the maturing of that faith, its putting down roots in personal life, and its shining forth in personal conduct. [17]

24 By design, this Catechism does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition among all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms and, even more, of those who instruct the faithful:

Whoever teaches must become "all things to all men" (I Cor 9:22), to win everyone to Christ. . . Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! Let them realize that some are in Christ as newborn babes, others as adolescents, and still others as adults in full command of their powers.... Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct. [18]

Above all - Charity

25 To conclude this Prologue, it is fitting to recall this pastoral principle stated by the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. [19]

[17] Cf. CT 20-22; 25.

[18] Roman Catechism, Preface II; cf. I Cor 9:22; I Pt 2:2

[19] Roman Catechism, Preface 10; cf. I Cor 13 8.

PART ONE:

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION ONE

“I BELIEVE” - “WE BELIEVE”

26 We begin our profession of faith by saying: “I believe” or “We believe”. Before expounding the Church's faith, as confessed in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy and lived in observance of God's commandments and in prayer, we must first ask what “to believe” means. Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning of his life. Thus we shall consider first that search (Chapter One), then the divine Revelation by which God comes to meet man (Chapter Two), and finally the response of faith (Chapter Three).

CHAPTER ONE

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD

I. The Desire for God

27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator. [1]

28 In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviour: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth. These forms of religious expression, despite the ambiguities they often bring with them, are so universal that one may well call man a religious being:

From one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “in him we live and move and have our being.” [2]

29 But this “intimate and vital bond of man to God” (GS 19 # 1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man. [3] Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil

in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call. [4]

30 “Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.” [5] Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, “an upright heart”, as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. and man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. [6]

[1](#) Vatican Council II, GS 19 # 1.

[2](#) Acts 17:26-28.

[3](#) GS 19 # 1.

[4](#) Cf. GS 19-21; Mt 13:22; Gen 3:8-10; Jon 1:3.

[5](#) Ps 105:3

[6](#) St. Augustine, Conf. I, I, I: PL 32, 659-661.

II. Ways of Coming to Know God

31 Created in God's image and called to know and love him, the person who seeks God discovers certain ways of coming to know him. These are also called proofs for the existence of God, not in the sense of proofs in the natural sciences, but rather in the sense of “converging and convincing arguments”, which allow us to attain certainty about the truth. These “ways” of approaching God from creation have a twofold point of departure: the physical world, and the human person.

32 The world: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. [7]

And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky. . . question all these realities. All respond: “See, we are beautiful.” Their beauty is a

profession [confessio]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [Pulcher] who is not subject to change? [8]

33 The human person: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of his spiritual soul. the soul, the “seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material”, [9] can have its origin only in God.

34 The world, and man, attest that they contain within themselves neither their first principle nor their final end, but rather that they participate in Being itself, which alone is without origin or end. Thus, in different ways, man can come to know that there exists a reality which is the first cause and final end of all things, a reality “that everyone calls God”. [10]

35 Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man, and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith.(so) the proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.

[7](#) Rom 1:19-20; cf., Acts 14:15, 17; 17:27-28; Wis 13:1-9.

[8](#) St. Augustine, Sermo 241, 2: PL 38, 1134,

[9](#) GS 18 # 1; cf. 14 # 2.

[10](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th I, 2, 3.

III. The Knowledge of God According to the Church

36 “Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason.” [11] Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created “in the image of God”. [12]

37 In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. the human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters

easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful. [13]

38 This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also “about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error”. [14]

[11](#) Vatican Council I, Dei Filius 2: DS 3004 cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, Dei Verbum 6.

[12](#) Cf. Gen 1:27

[13](#) Pius XII, Humani generis 561: DS 3875.

[14](#) Pius XII, Humani generis 561: DS 3876; cf. Dei Filius 2: DS 3005; DV 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th I, I, I.

IV. How Can We Speak about God?

39 In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about him to all men and with all men, and therefore of dialogue with other religions, with philosophy and science, as well as with unbelievers and atheists.

40 Since our knowledge of God is limited, our language about him is equally so. We can name God only by taking creatures as our starting point, and in accordance with our limited human ways of knowing and thinking.

41 All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially man, created in the image and likeness of God. the manifold perfections of creatures - their truth, their goodness, their beauty all reflect the infinite perfection of God. Consequently we can name God by taking his creatures’ perfections as our starting point, “for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator”. [15]

42 God transcends all creatures. We must therefore continually purify our language of everything in it that is limited, imagebound or imperfect, if we are not to confuse our image of God --”the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the invisible, the ungraspable”-- with our human representations. [16] Our human words always fall short of the mystery of God.

43 Admittedly, in speaking about God like this, our language is using human modes of expression; nevertheless it really does attain to God himself, though unable to express him in his infinite simplicity. Likewise, we must recall that “between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying an even greater dissimilitude”; [17] and that “concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him.” [18]

[15](#) Wis 13:5

[16](#) Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Anaphora.

[17](#) Lateran Council IV: DS 806.

[18](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, SCG 1, 30.

IN BRIEF

44 Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God.

45 Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness: When I am completely united to you, there will be no more sorrow or trials; entirely full of you, my life will be complete (St. Augustine, Conf. 10, 28, 39: PL 32, 795).

46 When he listens to the message of creation and to the voice of conscience, man can arrive at certainty about the existence of God, the cause and the end of everything.

47 The Church teaches that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, can be known with certainty from his works, by the natural light of human reason (cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 # 1: DS 3026),

48 We really can name God, starting from the manifold perfections of his creatures, which are likenesses of the infinitely perfect God, even if our limited language cannot exhaust the mystery.

49 Without the Creator, the creature vanishes (GS 36). This is the reason why believers know that the love of Christ urges them to bring the light of the living God to those who do not know him or who reject him.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD COMES TO MEET MAN

50 By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. [[1](#)] Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

[1](#) Cf. Dei Filius DS 3015.

Article 1

THE REVELATION OF GOD

I. God Reveals His “Plan of Loving Goodness”

51 “It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature.” [2]

52 God, who “dwells in unapproachable light”, wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. [3] By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity.

53 The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously “by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other” [4] and shed light on each another. It involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to man gradually. He prepares him to welcome by stages the supernatural Revelation that is to culminate in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons repeatedly speaks of this divine pedagogy using the image of God and man becoming accustomed to one another: the Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure. [5]

[2](#) DV 2; cf. Eph 1:9; 2:18; 2 Pt 1:4

[3](#) I Tim 6:16, cf. Eph 1:4-5.

[4](#) DV 2.

[5](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 20, 2: PG 7/1, 944; cf. 3, 17, 1; 4, 12, 4; 4, 21, 3.

II. The Stages of Revelation

In the beginning God makes himself known

54 “God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. and furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation - he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning.” [6] He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.

55 This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. “After the fall, (God) buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show his

solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing.” [7]

Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death. . . Again and again you offered a covenant to man. [8]

The covenant with Noah

56 After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity part by part. the covenant with Noah after the flood gives expression to the principle of the divine economy toward the “nations”, in other words, towards men grouped “in their lands, each with (its) own language, by their families, in their nations”. [9]

57 This state of division into many nations, each entrusted by divine providence to the guardianship of angels, is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity [10] united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel. [11] But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism. [12]

58 The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel. [13] The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek - a figure of Christ - and the upright “Noah, Daniel, and Job”. [14] Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to “gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad”. [15]

God chooses Abraham

59 In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house, [16] and makes him Abraham, that is, “the father of a multitude of nations”. “In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” [17]

60 The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church. [18] They would be the root on to which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe. [19]

61 The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honoured as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.

God forms his people Israel

62 After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Saviour. [20]

63 Israel is the priestly people of God, “called by the name of the LORD”, and “the first to hear the word of God”, [21] The people of “elder brethren” in the faith of Abraham.

64 Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts. [22] The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations. [23] Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. the purest figure among them is Mary. [24]

[6](#) DV 3; cf. Jn 1:3; Rom 1:19-20

[7](#) DV 3; cf. Gen 3:15; Rom 2:6-7.

[8](#) Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer IV, 118.

[9](#) Gen 10:5; cf. 9:9-10, 16; 10:20-31.

[10](#) Cf. Acts 17:26-27; Dt 4:19; Dt (LXX) 32:8.

[11](#) Cf. Wis 10:5; Gen 11:4-6

[12](#) Cf. Rom 1:18-25.

[13](#) Cf. Gen 9:16; Lk 21:24; DV 3.

[14](#) Cf. Gen 14:18; Heb 7:3; Ezek 14:14.

[15](#) Jn 11:52

[16](#) Gen 12:1

[17](#) Gen 17:5; 12:3 (LXX); cf. Gal 3:8

[18](#) Cf. Rom 11:28; Jn 11:52; 10:16.

[19](#) Cf. Rom 11:17-18, 24.

[20](#) Cf. DV 3.

[21](#) Dt 28: 10; Roman Missal, Good i Friday, General Intercession VI; see also Ex 19:6

[22](#) Cf. Is 2:2-4; Jer 31:31-34; Heb 10:16

[23](#) Cf. Ezek 36; Is 49:5-6; 53:11

[24](#) Cf. Ezek 2:3; Lk 1:38

III. Christ Jesus -- “Mediator and Fullness of All Revelation” [25]

God has said everything in his Word

65 “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” [26] Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word - and he has no more to say. . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish

behaviour but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty. [27]

There will be no further Revelation

66 “The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” [28] Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

67 Throughout the ages, there have been so-called “private” revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept “revelations” that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain nonChristian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such “revelations”.

[25](#) DV 2.

[26](#) Heb 1:1-2

[27](#) St. John of the Cross, *the Ascent of Mount Carmel* 2, 22, 3-5 in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. K. Kavanaugh OCD and O. Rodriguez OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 179-180: LH, Advent, week 2, Monday, OR.

[28](#) DV 4; cf. I Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13

IN BRIEF

68 By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life.

69 God has revealed himself to man by gradually communicating his own mystery in deeds and in words.

70 Beyond the witness to himself that God gives in created things, he manifested himself to our first parents, spoke to them and, after the fall, promised them salvation (cf Gen 3:15) and offered them his covenant.

71 God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf Gen 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts.

72 God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.

73 God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. the Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.

Article 2

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

74 God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”: [29] that is, of Christ Jesus. [30] Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach to the ends of the earth:

God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations. [31]

[29](#) 1 Tim 2:4

[30](#) cf. Jn 14:6

[31](#) DV 7; cf. 2 Cor 1:20; 3:16 - 4:6

I. The Apostolic Tradition

75 “Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up, commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips. In preaching the Gospel, they were to communicate the gifts of God to all men. This Gospel was to be the source of all saving truth and moral discipline.” [32]

In the apostolic preaching. . .

76 In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways: - orally “by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received - whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit”; [33] - in writing “by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing”. [34]

. . . continued in apostolic succession

77 “In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority.” [35] Indeed, “the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.” [36]

78 This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, “the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes.” [37] “The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and her prayer.” [38]

79 The Father's self-communication made through his Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church: “God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with the Spouse of his beloved Son. and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church - and through her in the world - leads believers to the full truth, and makes the Word of Christ dwell in them in all its richness.” [39]

[32](#) DV 7; cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15

[33](#) DV 7.

[34](#) DV 7.

[35](#) DV 7 # 2; St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 3, 1: PG 7/1, 848; Harvey, 2, 9.

[36](#) DV 8 # 1.

[37](#) DV 8 # 1.

[38](#) DV 8 # 3.

[39](#) DV 8 # 3; cf. Col 3:16.

II. The Relationship Between Tradition and Sacred Scripture

One common source. . .

80 “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal.” [40] Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age”. [41]

. . . two distinct modes of transmission

81 “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” [42]

“and [Holy] Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so

that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching.” [43]

82 As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, “does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” [44]

Apostolic Tradition and ecclesial traditions

83 The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on what they received from Jesus' teaching and example and what they learned from the Holy Spirit. The first generation of Christians did not yet have a written New Testament, and the New Testament itself demonstrates the process of living Tradition.

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.

[40](#) DV 9.

[41](#) Mt 28:20

[42](#) DV 9.

[43](#) DV 9.

[44](#) DV 9.

III. The Interpretation of the Heritage of Faith

The heritage of faith entrusted to the whole of the Church

84 The apostles entrusted the “Sacred deposit” of the faith (the depositum fidei), [45] contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to the whole of the Church. “By adhering to [this heritage] the entire holy people, united to its pastors, remains always faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. So, in maintaining, practising and professing the faith that has been handed on, there should be a remarkable harmony between the bishops and the faithful.” [46]

The Magisterium of the Church

85 “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.” [47] This means that

the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

86 “Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.” [48]

87 Mindful of Christ's words to his apostles: “He who hears you, hears me”, [49] The faithful receive with docility the teachings and directives that their pastors give them in different forms.

The dogmas of the faith

88 The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes in a definitive way truths having a necessary connection with them.

89 There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas. Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith. [50]

90 The mutual connections between dogmas, and their coherence, can be found in the whole of the Revelation of the mystery of Christ. [51] “In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or hierarchy of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.” [52]

The supernatural sense of faith

91 All the faithful share in understanding and handing on revealed truth. They have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who instructs them [53] and guides them into all truth. [54]

92 “The whole body of the faithful. . . cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of faith (sensus fidei) on the part of the whole people, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals.” [55]

93 “By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (Magisterium),. . . receives. . . the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. . . the People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life.” [56]

Growth in understanding the faith

94 Thanks to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the understanding of both the realities and the words of the heritage of faith is able to grow in the life of the Church: - “through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts”; [57] it is in

particular “theological research [which] deepens knowledge of revealed truth”. [58] - “from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience”, [59] The sacred Scriptures “grow with the one who reads them.” [60] - “from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth”. [61]

95 “It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.” [62]

[45](#) DV 10 # 1; cf. I Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12-14(Vulg.).

[46](#) DV 10 # 1; cf. Acts 2:42 (Greek); Pius XII, Apost. Const. *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1 November 1950: AAS 42 (1950), 756, taken along with the words of St. Cyprian, Epist. 66, 8: CSEL 3/2, 733: “The Church is the people united to its Priests, the flock adhering to its Shepherd.”

[47](#) DV 10 # 2.

[48](#) DV 10 para 2.

[49](#) Lk 10:16; cf. LG 20.

[50](#) Cf. Jn 8:31-32.

[51](#) Cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3016: *nexus mysteriorum*; LC 25.

[52](#) UR II.

[53](#) Cf. I Jn 2:20, 27

[54](#) Cf. . Jn 16:13

[55](#) LG 12; cf. St. Augustine, *De praed. sanct.* 14, 27: PL 44, 980.

[56](#) LG 12; cf. Jude 3.

[57](#) DV 8 # 2; cf. Lk 2:19, 51

[58](#) GS 62 # 7; cf. GS 44 # 2; DV 23; 24; UR 4.

[59](#) DV 8 # 2.

[60](#) DV 8 # 2.

[61](#) St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ezek.* 1, 7, 8: PL 76, 843D.

[62](#) DV 10 # 3.

IN BRIEF

96 What Christ entrusted to the apostles, they in turn handed on by their preaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, until Christ returns in glory.

97 “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God” (DV 10) in which, as in a mirror, the pilgrim Church contemplates God, the source of all her riches.

98 “The Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes” (DV 8 # 1).

99 Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith, the People of God as a whole never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine Revelation.

100 The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.

Article 3

SACRED SCRIPTURE

I. Christ - The Unique Word of Sacred Scripture

101 In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words: “Indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like men.” [63]

102 Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely: [64]

You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers, since he who was in the beginning God with God has no need of separate syllables; for he is not subject to time. [65]

103 For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body. [66]

104 In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, “but as what it really is, the word of God”. [67] “In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.” [68]

[63] DV 13.

[64] Cf. Heb 1:1-3

[65] St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 103, 4, 1: PL 37, 1378; cf. Ps 104; Jn 1:1

[66] Cf. DV 21.

[67] Th 2:13; cf. DV 24.

[68] DV 21.

II. Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture

105 God is the author of Sacred Scripture. “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” [69]

“For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, 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.” [70]

106 God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. “To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.” [71]

107 The inspired books teach the truth. “Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures.” [72]

108 Still, the Christian faith is not a “religion of the book”. Christianity is the religion of the “Word” of God, “not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living”. [73] If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, “open (our) minds to understand the Scriptures.” [74]

[69](#) DV 11;

[70](#) DV 11; cf. Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pt 1:19-21; 3:15-16

[71](#) DV 11.

[72](#) DV 11.

[73](#) St. Bernard, S. missus est hom. 4, 11: PL 183, 86.

[74](#) Cf. Lk 24:45

III. The Holy Spirit, Interpreter of Scripture

109 In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words. [75]

110 In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. “For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.” [76]

111 But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. “Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.” [77]

The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it. [78]

112 Be especially attentive “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture”. Different as the books which compose it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover. [79]

The phrase “heart of Christ” can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted. [80]

113 2. Read the Scripture within “the living Tradition of the whole Church”. According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture (“... according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church” [81]).

114 3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith. [82] By “analogy of faith” we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

The senses of Scripture

115 According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. the profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

116 The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.” [83]

117 The spiritual sense. Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs. 1. the allegorical sense. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism. [84] 2. the moral sense. the events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written “for our instruction”. [85] 3. the anagogical sense (Greek: anagoge, “leading”). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. [86]

118 A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses:

The Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith; The Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny. [87]

119 “It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgement. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God.” [88]

But I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me. [89]

[75](#) Cf. DV 12 # 1.

[76](#) DV 12 # 2.

[77](#) DV 12 # 3.

[78](#) Cf. DV 12 # 4.

[79](#) Cf. Lk 24:25-27, 44-46

[80](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, Expos. in Ps. 21, 11; cf. Ps 22:14.

[81](#) Origen, Hom. in Lev. 5, 5: PG 12, 454D.

[82](#) Cf. Rom 12:6.

[83](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th I, 1, 10, ad I.

[84](#) Cf. I Cor 10:2.

[85](#) I Cor 10:11; cf. Heb 3:1 - 4:11.

[86](#) Cf. Rev 21:1 - 22:5.

[87](#) Lettera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.

[88](#) DV 12 # 3.

[89](#) St. Augustine, Contra epistolam Manichaei 5, 6: PL 42, 176.

IV. The Canon of Scripture

120 It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. [90]

This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New. [91]

The Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

The New Testament: the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, and Revelation (the Apocalypse).

The Old Testament

121 The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, [92] for the Old Covenant has never been revoked.

122 Indeed, “the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately SO oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men.” [93] “Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional, [94] The books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these writings “are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way.” [95]

123 Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God. the Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism).

The New Testament

124 “The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament” [96] which hand on the ultimate truth of God's Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son: his acts, teachings, Passion and glorification, and his Church's beginnings under the Spirit's guidance. [97]

125 The Gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures “because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Saviour”. [98]

126 We can distinguish three stages in the formation of the Gospels: 1. the life and teaching of Jesus. the Church holds firmly that the four Gospels, “whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up.” [99] 2. the oral tradition. “For, after the ascension of the Lord, the apostles handed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but with that fuller understanding which they, instructed by the glorious events of Christ and enlightened by the Spirit of truth, now enjoyed.” [100] 3. the written Gospels. “The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form; others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches, the while sustaining the form of preaching, but always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus.” [101]

127 The fourfold Gospel holds a unique place in the Church, as is evident both in the veneration which the liturgy accords it and in the surpassing attraction it has exercised on the saints at all times:

There is no doctrine which could be better, more precious and more splendid than the text of the Gospel. Behold and retain what our Lord and Master, Christ, has taught by his words and accomplished by his deeds. [102]

But above all it's the gospels that occupy my mind when I'm at prayer; my poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I'm always finding fresh lights there; hidden meanings which had meant nothing to me hitherto. [103]

The unity of the Old and New Testaments

128 The Church, as early as apostolic times, [104] and then constantly in her Tradition, has illuminated the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.

129 Christians therefore read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament; but it must not make us forget that the Old Testament retains its own intrinsic value as Revelation reaffirmed by our Lord himself. [105] Besides, the New Testament has to be read in the light of the Old. Early Christian catechesis made constant use of the Old Testament. [106] As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. [107]

130 Typology indicates the dynamic movement toward the fulfilment of the divine plan when "God [will] be everything to everyone." [108] Nor do the calling of the patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt, for example, lose their own value in God's plan, from the mere fact that they were intermediate stages.

[90](#) Cf. DV 8 # 3.

[91](#) Cf. DS 179; 1334-1336; 1501-1504.

[92](#) Cf. DV 14.

[93](#) DV 15.

[94](#) DV 15.

[95](#) DV 15.

[96](#) DV 17; cf. Rom 1:16

[97](#) Cf. DV 20.

[98](#) DV 18.

[99](#) DV 19; cf. Acts 1:1-2

[100](#) DV 19.

[101](#) DV 19.

[102](#) St. Caesaria the Younger to St. Richildis and St. Radegunde: SCh 345, 480.

[103](#) St. Therese of Lisieux, *Autobiography of a Saint*, tr. Ronald Knox (London: Collins,

1960), 175.

[104](#) Cf. I Cor 10:6, 11; Heb 10:1; 1 Pt 3:21.

[105](#) Cf. Mk 12:29-31

[106](#) Cf. I Cor 5:6-8; 10:1-11.

[107](#) Cf. St. Augustine, Quaest. in Hept. 2, 73: PL 34,623; Cf. DU 16.

[108](#) 1 Cor 15:28

V. Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

131 “and such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigour, and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life.” [\[109\]](#) Hence “access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful.” [\[110\]](#)

132 “Therefore, the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology. the ministry of the Word, too - pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should hold pride of place - is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture.” [\[111\]](#)

133 The Church “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ. [\[112\]](#)

[109](#) DV 21.

[110](#) DV 22.

[111](#) DV 24.

[112](#) DV 25; cf. Phil 3:8 and St. Jerome, Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii prol.: PL 24, 17B.

IN BRIEF

134 “All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ, because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ” (Hugh of St. Victor, De arca Noe 2, 8: PL 176, 642).

135 “The Sacred Scriptures contain the Word of God and, because they are inspired, they are truly the Word of God” (DV 24).

136 God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors; he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth (cf DV 11).

137 Interpretation of the inspired Scripture must be attentive above all to what God wants to reveal through the sacred authors for our salvation. What comes from the Spirit is not fully “understood except by the Spirit's action” (cf. Origen, Hom. in Ex. 4, 5: PG 12, 320).

138 The Church accepts and venerates as inspired the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New.

139 The four Gospels occupy a central place because Christ Jesus is their centre.

140 The unity of the two Testaments proceeds from the unity of God's plan and his Revelation. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfils the Old; the two shed light on each other; both are true Word of God.

141 “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord” (DV 21): both nourish and govern the whole Christian life. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105; cf. Is 50:4).

CHAPTER THREE

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD

142 By his Revelation, “the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company.” [1] The adequate response to this invitation is faith.

143 By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. [2] With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, “the obedience of faith”. [3]

¹ DV 2; cf. Col 1:15; I Tim 1:17; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15; Bar 3:38 (Vulg.).

² Cf. DV 5.

³ Cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26

Article 1

I BELIEVE

I. The Obedience of Faith

144 To obey (from the Latin ob-audire, to “hear or listen to”) in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is

the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. the Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

Abraham - “father of all who believe”

145 The Letter to the Hebrews, in its great eulogy of the faith of Israel's ancestors, lays special emphasis on Abraham's faith: “By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go.” [4] By faith, he lived as a stranger and pilgrim in the promised land. [5] By faith, Sarah was given to conceive the son of the promise. and by faith Abraham offered his only son in sacrifice. [6]

146 Abraham thus fulfils the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”: [7] “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” [8] Because he was “strong in his faith”, Abraham became the “father of all who believe”. [9]

147 The Old Testament is rich in witnesses to this faith. the Letter to the Hebrews proclaims its eulogy of the exemplary faith of the ancestors who “received divine approval”. [10] Yet “God had foreseen something better for us”: the grace of believing in his Son Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith”. [11]

Mary - “Blessed is she who believed”

148 The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that “with God nothing will be impossible” and so giving her assent: “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word.” [12] Elizabeth greeted her: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” [13] It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed. [14]

149 Throughout her life and until her last ordeal [15] when Jesus her son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfilment of God's word. and so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

[4](#) Heb 11:8; cf. Gen 12:1-4.

[5](#) Cf. Gen 23:4

[6](#) Cf. Heb 11:17

[7](#) Heb 11:1

[8](#) Rom 4:3; cf. Gen 15:6

[9](#) Rom 4:11, 18; 4:20; cf. Gen 15:5.

[10](#) Heb 11:2, 39

[11](#) Heb 11:40; 12:2

[12](#) Lk 1:37-38; cf. Gen 18:14

[13](#) Lk 1:45

[14](#) Cf. Lk 1:48

[15](#) Cf. Lk 2:35

II. “I Know Whom I Have Believed” [\[16\]](#)

To believe in God alone

150 Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature. [\[17\]](#)

To believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God

151 For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his “beloved Son”, in whom the Father is “well pleased”; God tells us to listen to him. [\[18\]](#) The Lord himself said to his disciples: “Believe in God, believe also in me.” [\[19\]](#) We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” [\[20\]](#) Because he “has seen the Father”, Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him. [\[21\]](#)

To believe in the Holy Spirit

152 One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For “no one can say “Jesus is Lord”, except by the Holy Spirit”, [\[22\]](#) who “searches everything, even the depths of God. . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God.” [\[23\]](#) Only God knows God completely: we believe in the Holy Spirit because he is God.

The Church never ceases to proclaim her faith in one only God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[16](#) 2 Tim 1:12

[17](#) Cf. Jer 17:5-6; Pss 40:5; 146:3-4

[18](#) Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7

[19](#) Jn 14:1

[20](#) Jn 1:18.

[21](#) Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27

[22](#) I Cor 12:3

[23](#) I Cor 2:10-11.

III. The Characteristics of Faith

Faith is a grace

153 When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come “from flesh and blood”, but from “my Father who is in heaven”. [24] Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.'” [25]

Faith is a human act

154 Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions, or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to “yield by faith the full submission of... intellect and will to God who reveals”, [26] and to share in an interior communion with him.

155 In faith, the human intellect and will co-operate with divine grace: “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.” [27]

Faith and understanding

156 What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe “because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived”. [28] So “that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit.” [29] Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability “are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all”; they are “motives of credibility” (motiva credibilitatis), which show that the assent of faith is “by no means a blind impulse of the mind”. [30]

157 Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but “the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives.” [31] “Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.” [32]

158 “Faith seeks understanding”: [33] it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith, and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. the grace of faith opens “the eyes of your hearts” [34] to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation: that is, of the totality of God's plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the centre of the revealed mystery. “The same Holy Spirit

constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that Revelation may be more and more profoundly understood.” [35] In the words of St. Augustine, “I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.” [36]

159 Faith and science: “Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth.” [37] “Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. the humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.” [38]

The freedom of faith

160 To be human, “man's response to God by faith must be free, and... therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. the act of faith is of its very nature a free act.” [39] “God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced. . . This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus.” [40] Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. “For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom... grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself.” [41]

The necessity of faith

161 Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation. [42] “Since “without faith it is impossible to please (God) “ and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life 'But he who endures to the end.'“]

Perseverance in faith

162 Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: “Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith.” [44] To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; [45] it must be “working through charity,” abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church. [46]

Faith - the beginning of eternal life

163 Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God “face to face”, “as he is”. [47] So faith is already the beginning of eternal life: When we contemplate the blessings of faith even now, as if gazing at a reflection in

a mirror, it is as if we already possessed the wonderful things which our faith assures us we shall one day enjoy. [48]

164 Now, however, “we walk by faith, not by sight”; [49] we perceive God as “in a mirror, dimly” and only “in part”. [50] Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.

165 It is then we must turn to the witnesses of faith: to Abraham, who “in hope... believed against hope”; [51] to the Virgin Mary, who, in “her pilgrimage of faith”, walked into the “night of faith” [52] in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” [53]

[24](#) Mt 16:17; cf. Gal 1:15; Mt 11:25.

[25](#) DV 5; cf. DS 377; 3010.

[26](#) Dei Filius: 3; DS 3008.

[27](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 2, 9; cf. Dei Filius 3; DS 3010.

[28](#) Dei Filius: 3 DS 3008.

[29](#) Dei Filius: 3 DS 3009.

[30](#) Dei Filius: 3; DS 3008-3010; Cf. Mk 16 20; Heb 2:4

[31](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II 171, 5, obj. 3.

[32](#) John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (London Longman, 1878) 239.

[33](#) St. Anselm, *Prosl. prooem.* PL 153 225A.

[34](#) Eph 1:18

[35](#) DV 5.

[36](#) St. Augustine, *Sermo* 43, 7, 9: PL 38, 257-258.

[37](#) Dei Filius 4: DS 3017.

[38](#) GS 36 # 1.

[39](#) DH 10; cf. CIC, can. 748 # 2.

[40](#) DH 11.

[41](#) DH 11; cf. Jn 18:37; 12:32.

[42](#) Cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:36; 6:40 et al.

[44](#) 1 Tim 1:18-19

[45](#) Cf. Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5; 22:32

[46](#) Gal 5:6; Rom 15:13; cf. Jas 2:14-26

[47](#) 1 Cor 13:12; I Jn 3:2

[48](#) St. Basil De Spiritu Sancto 15, 36: PG 32, 132; cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 4, 1.

[49](#) 2 Cor 5:7.

[50](#) 1 Cor 13:12.

[51](#) Rom 4:18

[52](#) LG 58; John Paul II, RMat 18.

[53](#) Heb 12:1-2. Article 2

Article 2

WE BELIEVE

166 Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. the believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbour impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

167 “I believe” (Apostles' Creed) is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during Baptism. “We believe” (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed) is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. “I believe” is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both “I believe” and “We believe”.

I. “Lord, Look Upon the Faith of Your Church”

168 It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains my faith. Everywhere, it is the Church that first confesses the Lord: “Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you”, as we sing in the hymn *Te Deum*; with her and in her, we are won over and brought to confess: “I believe”, “We believe”. It is through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by Baptism. In the *Rituale Romanum*, the minister of Baptism asks the catechumen: “What do you ask of God's Church?” and the answer is: “Faith.” “What does faith offer you?” “Eternal life.” [\[54\]](#)

169 Salvation comes from God alone; but because we receive the life of faith through the Church, she is our mother: “We believe the Church as the mother of our new birth, and not in the Church as if she were the author of our salvation.” [\[55\]](#) Because she is our mother, she is also our teacher in the faith.

[54](#) Roman Ritual, Rite of Baptism of Adults.

[55](#) Faustus of Riez, *De Spiritu Sancto* 1, 2: PL 62, II.

II. The Language of Faith

170 We do not believe in formulae, but in those realities they express, which faith allows us to touch. “The believer's act [of faith] does not terminate in the propositions, but in the realities

[which they express].” [56] All the same, we do approach these realities with the help of formulations of the faith which permit us to express the faith and to hand it on, to celebrate it in community, to assimilate and live on it more and more.

171 The Church, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth”, faithfully guards “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”. She guards the memory of Christ's words; it is she who from generation to generation hands on the apostles' confession of faith. [57] As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith.

[56](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, 1,2, ad 2.

[57](#) I Tim 3:15; Jude 3.

III. Only One Faith

172 Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God and Father. [58] St. Irenaeus of Lyons, a witness of this faith, declared:

173 “Indeed, the Church, though scattered throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, having received the faith from the apostles and their disciples. . . guards [this preaching and faith] with care, as dwelling in but a single house, and similarly believes as if having but one soul and a single heart, and preaches, teaches and hands on this faith with a unanimous voice, as if possessing only one mouth.” [59]

174 “For though languages differ throughout the world, the content of the Tradition is one and the same. the Churches established in Germany have no other faith or Tradition, nor do those of the Iberians, nor those of the Celts, nor those of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, nor those established at the centre of the world. . .” [60] The Church's message “is true and solid, in which one and the same way of salvation appears throughout the whole world.” [61]

175 “We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God's Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed.” [62]

[58](#) Cf. Eph 4:4-6

[59](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. I, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 549-552.

[60](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. I, 10, 1-2: PG 7/1, 552-553.

[61](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 5, 20, I: PG 7/2, 1177.

[62](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 24, I: PG 7/1, 966.

IN BRIEF

176 Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.

177 “To believe” has thus a twofold reference: to the person, and to the truth: to the truth, by trust in the person who bears witness to it.

178 We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

179 Faith is a supernatural gift from God. In order to believe, man needs the interior helps of the Holy Spirit.

180 “Believing” is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.

181 “Believing” is an ecclesial act. the Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith. the Church is the mother of all believers. “No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother” (St. Cyprian, De unit. 6: PL 4, 519).

182 We believe all “that which is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed” (Paul VI, CPG # 20).

183 Faith is necessary for salvation. the Lord himself affirms: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16).

184 “Faith is a foretaste of the knowledge that will make us blessed in the life to come” (St. Thomas Aquinas. Comp. theol. 1, 2).

The Credo

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary Under Pontius Pilate He was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

SECTION TWO

I. THE CREEDS

185 Whoever says “I believe” says “I pledge myself to what we believe.” Communion in faith needs a common language of faith, normative for all and uniting all in the same confession of faith.

186 From the beginning, the apostolic Church expressed and handed on her faith in brief formulae normative for all. [1] But already very early on, the Church also wanted to gather the essential elements of her faith into organic and articulated summaries, intended especially for candidates for Baptism:

This synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. and just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and the New Testaments. [2]

187 Such syntheses are called “professions of faith” since they summarize the faith that Christians profess. They are called “creeds” on account of what is usually their first word in Latin: *credo* (“I believe”). They are also called “symbols of faith”.

188 The Greek word *symbolon* meant half of a broken object, for example, a seal presented as a token of recognition. the broken parts were placed together to verify the bearer's identity. the symbol of faith, then, is a sign of recognition and communion between believers. *Symbolon* also means a gathering, collection or summary. A symbol of faith is a summary of the principal truths of the faith and therefore serves as the first and fundamental point of reference for catechesis.

189 The first “profession of faith” is made during Baptism. the symbol of faith is first and foremost the baptismal creed. Since Baptism is given “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, [3] The truths of faith professed during Baptism are articulated in terms of their reference to the three persons of the Holy Trinity.

190 and so the Creed is divided into three parts: “the first part speaks of the first divine Person and the wonderful work of creation; the next speaks of the second divine Person and the mystery of his redemption of men; the final part speaks of the third divine Person, the origin and source of our sanctification.” [4] These are “the three chapters of our [baptismal] seal”. [5]

191 “These three parts are distinct although connected with one another. According to a comparison often used by the Fathers, we call them articles. Indeed, just as in our bodily members there are certain articulations which distinguish and separate them, so too in this profession of faith, the name “articles” has justly and rightly been given to the truths we must believe particularly and distinctly.” [6] In accordance with an ancient tradition, already attested to by St. Ambrose, it is also customary to reckon the articles of the Creed as twelve, thus symbolizing the fullness of the apostolic faith by the number of the apostles. [7]

192 Through the centuries many professions or symbols of faith have been articulated in response to the needs of the different eras: the creeds of the different apostolic and ancient Churches, [8] e.g., the Quicumque, also called the Athanasian Creed; [9] The professions of faith of certain Councils, such as Toledo, Lateran, Lyons, Trent; [10] or the symbols of certain popes, e.g., the Fides Damasi [11] or the Credo of the People of God of Paul VI. [12]

193 None of the creeds from the different stages in the Church's life can be considered superseded or irrelevant. They help us today to attain and deepen the faith of all times by means of the different summaries made of it. Among all the creeds, two occupy a special place in the Church's life:

194 The Apostles' Creed is so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith. It is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is “the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith”. [13]

195 The Niceno-Constantinopolitan or Nicene Creed draws its great authority from the fact that it stems from the first two ecumenical Councils (in 325 and 381). It remains common to all the great Churches of both East and West to this day.

196 Our presentation of the faith will follow the Apostles' Creed, which constitutes, as it were, “the oldest Roman catechism”. the presentation will be completed however by constant references to the Nicene Creed, which is often more explicit and more detailed.

197 As on the day of our Baptism, when our whole life was entrusted to the “standard of teaching”, [14] let us embrace the Creed of our life-giving faith. To say the Credo with faith is to enter into communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and also with the whole Church which transmits the faith to us and in whose midst we believe:

This Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and an ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul. [15]

[1](#) Cf. Rom 10:9; I Cor 15:3-5, etc.

[2](#) St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. illum. 5, 12: PG 33, 521-524.

[3](#) Mt 28:19

[4](#) Roman Catechism I, 1, 3.

[5](#) St. Irenaeus, Dem. ap. 100: SCh 62, 170.

[6](#) Roman Catechism I, I, 4.

[7](#) Cf. St. Ambrose, Expl. symb. 8: PL 17, 1196.

[8](#) Cf. DS 1-64.

[9](#) Cf. DS 75-76.

[10](#) Cf. DS 525-541; 800-802; 851-861; 1862-1870.

[11](#) Cf. DS 71-72.

[12](#) Paul VI, CPG (1968).

[13](#) St. Ambrose, Expl. symb. 7: PL 17, 1196.

[14](#) Rom 6:17

[15](#) St. Ambrose, Expl. symb. I: PL 17, 1193.

CHAPTER ONE

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

198 Our profession of faith begins with God, for God is the First and the Last, [1] The beginning and the end of everything. the Credo begins with God the Father, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works.

[1](#) Cf. Is 44:6.

Article 1

“I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH”

Paragraph 1. I BELIEVE IN GOD

199 “I believe in God”: this first affirmation of the Apostles' Creed is also the most fundamental. the whole Creed speaks of God, and when it also speaks of man and of the world it does so in relation to God. the other articles of the Creed all depend on the first, just as the remaining Commandments make the first explicit. the other articles help us to know God better as he revealed himself progressively to men. “The faithful first profess their belief in God.” [2]

I. "I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD"

200 These are the words with which the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed begins. the confession of God's oneness, which has its roots in the divine revelation of the Old Covenant, is inseparable from the profession of God's existence and is equally fundamental. God is unique; there is only one God: "The Christian faith confesses that God is one in nature, substance and essence." [3]

201 To Israel, his chosen, God revealed himself as the only One: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." [4] Through the prophets, God calls Israel and all nations to turn to him, the one and only God: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. . . To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. 'Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength.'" [5]

202 Jesus himself affirms that God is "the one Lord" whom you must love "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength". [6] At the same time Jesus gives us to understand that he himself is "the Lord". [7] To confess that Jesus is Lord is distinctive of Christian faith. This is not contrary to belief in the One God. Nor does believing in the Holy Spirit as "Lord and giver of life" introduce any division into the One God:

We firmly believe and confess without reservation that there is only one true God, eternal infinite (immensus) and unchangeable, incomprehensible, almighty and ineffable, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; three persons indeed, but one essence, substance or nature entirely simple.

II. GOD REVEALS HIS NAME

203 God revealed himself to his people Israel by making his name known to them. A name expresses a person's essence and identity and the meaning of this person's life. God has a name; he is not an anonymous force. To disclose one's name is to make oneself known to others; in a way it is to hand oneself over by becoming accessible, capable of being known more intimately and addressed personally.

204 God revealed himself progressively and under different names to his people, but the revelation that proved to be the fundamental one for both the Old and the New Covenants was the revelation of the divine name to Moses in the theophany of the burning bush, on the threshold of the Exodus and of the covenant on Sinai.

The living God

205 God calls Moses from the midst of a bush that burns without being consumed: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." [9] God is the God of the fathers, the One who had called and guided the patriarchs in their wanderings. He is the faithful and compassionate God who remembers them and his promises; he comes to free their descendants from slavery. He is the God who, from beyond space and time, can do this and wills to do it, the God who will put his almighty power to work for this plan.

“I Am who I Am”

Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” and he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'. . . this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.” [10]

206 In revealing his mysterious name, YHWH (“I AM HE WHO IS”, “I AM WHO AM” or “I AM WHO I AM”), God says who he is and by what name he is to be called. This divine name is mysterious just as God is mystery. It is at once a name revealed and something like the refusal of a name, and hence it better expresses God as what he is - infinitely above everything that we can understand or say: he is the “hidden God”, his name is ineffable, and he is the God who makes himself close to men. [11]

207 By revealing his name God at the same time reveals his faithfulness which is from everlasting to everlasting, valid for the past (“I am the God of your father”), as for the future (“I will be with you”). [12] God, who reveals his name as “I AM”, reveals himself as the God who is always there, present to his people in order to save them.

208 Faced with God's fascinating and mysterious presence, man discovers his own insignificance. Before the burning bush, Moses takes off his sandals and veils his face in the presence of God's holiness. [13] Before the glory of the thrice-holy God, Isaiah cries out: “Woe is me! I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips.” [14] Before the divine signs wrought by Jesus, Peter exclaims: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” [15] But because God is holy, he can forgive the man who realizes that he is a sinner before him: “I will not execute my fierce anger. . . for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst.” [16] The apostle John says likewise: “We shall. . . reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” [17]

209 Out of respect for the holiness of God, the people of Israel do not pronounce his name. In the reading of Sacred Scripture, the revealed name (YHWH) is replaced by the divine title “LORD” (in Hebrew Adonai, in Greek Kyrios). It is under this title that the divinity of Jesus will be acclaimed: “Jesus is LORD.”

“A God merciful and gracious”

210 After Israel's sin, when the people had turned away from God to worship the golden calf, God hears Moses' prayer of intercession and agrees to walk in the midst of an unfaithful people, thus demonstrating his love. [18] When Moses asks to see his glory, God responds “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name “the LORD” [YHWH].” [19] Then the LORD passes before Moses and proclaims, “YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”; Moses then confesses that the LORD is a forgiving God. [20]

211 The divine name, “I Am” or “He Is”, expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps “steadfast love for thousands”. [21] By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is “rich in mercy”. [22] By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that “I AM”.” [23]

God alone IS

212 Over the centuries, Israel's faith was able to manifest and deepen realization of the riches contained in the revelation of the divine name. God is unique; there are no other gods besides him. [24]

He transcends the world and history. He made heaven and earth: “They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment....but you are the same, and your years have no end.” [25]

In God “there is no variation or shadow due to change.” [26] God is “HE WHO IS”, from everlasting to everlasting, and as such remains ever faithful to himself and to his promises.

213 The revelation of the ineffable name “I AM WHO AM” contains then the truth that God alone IS. the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and following it the Church's Tradition, understood the divine name in this sense: God is the fullness of Being and of every perfection, without origin and without end. All creatures receive all that they are and have from him; but he alone is his very being, and he is of himself everything that he is.

III. GOD, “HE WHO IS”, IS TRUTH AND LOVE

214 God, “HE WHO IS”, revealed himself to Israel as the one “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness”. [27] These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. “I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness.” [28] He is the Truth, for “God is light and in him there is no darkness”; “God is love”, as the apostle John teaches. [29]

God is Truth

215 “The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.” [30] “and now, O LORD God, you are God, and your words are true”; [31] this is why God's promises always come true. [32] God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. the beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness and faithfulness.

216 God's truth is his wisdom, which commands the whole created order and governs the world. [33] God, who alone made heaven and earth, can alone impart true knowledge of every created thing in relation to himself. [34]

217 God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is “true instruction”. [35] When he sends his Son into the world it will be “to bear witness to the truth”: [36] “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true.” [37]

God is Love

218 In the course of its history, Israel was able to discover that God had only one reason to reveal himself to them, a single motive for choosing them from among all peoples as his special possession: his sheer gratuitous love. [38] and thanks to the prophets Israel understood that it was again out of love that God never stopped saving them and pardoning their unfaithfulness and sins. [39]

219 God's love for Israel is compared to a father's love for his son. His love for his people is stronger than a mother's for her children. God loves his people more than a bridegroom his beloved; his love will be victorious over even the worst infidelities and will extend to his most precious gift: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.” [40]

220 God's love is “everlasting”: [41] “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.” [42] Through Jeremiah, God declares to his people, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” [43]

221 But St. John goes even further when he affirms that “God is love”: [44] God's very being is love. By sending his only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed his innermost secret: [45] God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange.

IV. THE IMPLICATIONS OF FAITH IN ONE GOD

222 Believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life.

223 It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty: “Behold, God is great, and we know him not.” [46] Therefore, we must “serve God first”. [47]

224 It means living in thanksgiving: if God is the only One, everything we are and have comes from him: “What have you that you did not receive?” [48] “What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me?” [49]

225 It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men: everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. [50]

226 It means making good use of created things: faith in God, the only One, leads us to use everything that is not God only insofar as it brings us closer to him, and to detach ourselves from it insofar as it turns us away from him: My Lord and my God, take from me everything that

distances me from you. My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you
My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you. [51]

227 It means trusting God in every circumstance, even in adversity. A prayer of St. Teresa of
Jesus wonderfully expresses this trust:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you Everything passes / God never changes
Patience / Obtains all Whoever has God / Wants for nothing God alone is enough. [52]

IN BRIEF

228 “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD...” (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29). “The supreme
being must be unique, without equal. . . If God is not one, he is not God” (Tertullian, Adv. Marc.,
1, 3, 5: PL 2, 274).

229 Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal, and
neither to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him.

230 Even when he reveals himself, God remains a mystery beyond words: “If you understood
him, it would not be God” (St. Augustine, Sermo 52, 6, 16: PL 38, 360 and Sermo 117, 3, 5: PL
38, 663).

231 The God of our faith has revealed himself as HE WHO IS; and he has made himself known
as “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6). God's very being is Truth and Love.

[2](#) Roman Catechism I, 2, 2.

[3](#) Roman Catechism I, 2, 2.

[4](#) Dt 6:45.

[5](#) Is 45:22-24; cf. Phil 2:10-11.

[6](#) Mk 12:29-30

[7](#) Cf. Mk 12:35-37.

[9](#) EX 3:6

[10](#) EX 3:13-15

[11](#) Cf. Is 45:15; Judg 13:18

[12](#) EX 3:6, 12

[13](#) Cf. EX 3:5-6

[14](#) Is 6:5

[15](#) Lk 5:8

[16](#) Hos 11:9

[17](#) I Jn 3:19-20

[18](#) Cf. Ex 32; 33: 12-17

[19](#) Ex 33:18-19.

[20](#) Ex 34:5-6; cf. 34:9

[21](#) Ex 34:7

[22](#) Eph 2:4

[23](#) Jn 8:28 (Greek).

[24](#) Cf. Is 44:6

[25](#) Ps 102:26-27

[26](#) Jas 1:17

[27](#) Ex 34:6

[28](#) Ps 138:2; cf. Ps 85:11

[29](#) I Jn 1:5; 4:8

[30](#) Ps 119:160

[31](#) 2 Sam 7:28

[32](#) Cf. Dt 7:9

[33](#) Cf Wis 13:1-9.

[34](#) Cf Ps 115:15; Wis 7:17-21.

[35](#) Mal 2:6.

[36](#) Jn 18:37.

[37](#) I Jn 5:20; cf. Jn 17:3.

[38](#) Cf. Dt 4:37; 7:8; 10:15.

[39](#) Cf. Is 43:1-7; Hos 2.

[40](#) Jn 3:16; cf. Hos 11:1; Is 49:14-15; 62 :4-5; Ezek 16; Hos 11.

[41](#) Is 54:8.

[42](#) Is 54: 10; cf. 54:8.

[43](#) Jer 31:3.

[44](#) I Jn 4:8, 16

[45](#) Cf. I Cor 2:7-16; Eph 3:9-12.

[46](#) Job 36:26.

[47](#) St. Joan of Arc.

[48](#) I Cor 4:7.

[49](#) Ps 116:12.

[50](#) Gen 1:26.

[51](#) St. Nicholas of Flue; cf. Mt 5:29-30; 16:24-26.

[52](#) St. Teresa of Jesus, Poesias 30 in the Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, vol. III, tr. K. Kavanaugh OCD and O. Rodriguez OCD (Washington DC Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985), 386 no. 9. tr. John Wall.

Paragraph 2. THE FATHER

I. “IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

232 Christians are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [\[53\]](#) Before receiving the sacrament, they respond to a three-part question when asked to confess the Father, the Son and the Spirit: “I do.” “The faith of all Christians rests on the Trinity.” [\[54\]](#)

233 Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their names, [\[55\]](#) for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.

234 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the “hierarchy of the truths of faith”. [56] The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men “and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin”. [57]

235 This paragraph expounds briefly (I) how the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was revealed, (II) how the Church has articulated the doctrine of the faith regarding this mystery, and (III) how, by the divine missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, God the Father fulfils the “plan of his loving goodness” of creation, redemption and sanctification.

236 The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (theologia) and economy (oikonomia). “Theology” refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and “economy” to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the oikonomia the theologia is revealed to us; but conversely, the theologia illuminates the whole oikonomia. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions.

237 The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God”. [58] To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel's faith before the Incarnation of God's Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD AS TRINITY

The Father revealed by the Son

238 Many religions invoke God as “Father”. the deity is often considered the “father of gods and of men”. In Israel, God is called “Father” inasmuch as he is Creator of the world. [59] Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, “his first-born son”. [60] God is also called the Father of the king of Israel. Most especially he is “the Father of the poor”, of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection. [61]

239 By calling God “Father”, the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, [62] which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. the language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he

is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: [63] no one is father as God is Father.

240 Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father by his relationship to his only Son who, reciprocally, is Son only in relation to his Father: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” [64]

241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”; as “the image of the invisible God”; as the “radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature”. [65]

242 Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is “consubstantial” with the Father, that is, one only God with him. [66] The second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed “the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father”. [67]

The Father and the son revealed by the spirit

243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of “another Paraclete” (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously “spoken through the prophets”, the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them “into all the truth”. [68] The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.

244 The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. the Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father. [69] The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification [70] reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

245 The apostolic faith concerning the Spirit was confessed by the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (381): “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.” [71] By this confession, the Church recognizes the Father as “the source and origin of the whole divinity”. [72] But the eternal origin of the Spirit is not unconnected with the Son's origin: “The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature. . . Yet he is not called the Spirit of the Father alone,. . . but the Spirit of both the Father and the Son.” [73] The Creed of the Church from the Council of Constantinople confesses: “With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified.” [74]

246 The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque)”. the Council of Florence in 1438 explains: “The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration... And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the

Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.” [75]

247 The affirmation of the filioque does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447, [76] even before Rome, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, came to recognize and receive the Symbol of 381. the use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). the introduction of the filioque into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

248 At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he “who proceeds from the Father”, it affirms that he comes from the Father through the Son. [77] The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque). It says this, “legitimately and with good reason”, [78] for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as “the principle without principle”, [79] is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds. [80] This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.

III. THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE TEACHING OF THE FAITH

The formation of the Trinitarian dogma

249 From the beginning, the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity has been at the very root of the Church's living faith, principally by means of Baptism. It finds its expression in the rule of baptismal faith, formulated in the preaching, catechesis and prayer of the Church. Such formulations are already found in the apostolic writings, such as this salutation taken up in the Eucharistic liturgy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” [81]

250 During the first centuries the Church sought to clarify her Trinitarian faith, both to deepen her own understanding of the faith and to defend it against the errors that were deforming it. This clarification was the work of the early councils, aided by the theological work of the Church Fathers and sustained by the Christian people's sense of the faith.

251 In order to articulate the dogma of the Trinity, the Church had to develop her own terminology with the help of certain notions of philosophical origin: “substance”, “person” or “hypostasis”, “relation” and so on. In doing this, she did not submit the faith to human wisdom, but gave a new and unprecedented meaning to these terms, which from then on would be used to signify an ineffable mystery, “infinitely beyond all that we can humanly understand”. [82]

252 The Church uses (I) the term “substance” (rendered also at times by “essence” or “nature”) to designate the divine being in its unity, (II) the term “person” or “hypostasis” to designate the

Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the real distinction among them, and (III) the term “relation” to designate the fact that their distinction lies in the relationship of each to the others.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity

253 The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity”. [83] The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: “The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God.” [84] In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), “Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature.” [85]

254 The divine persons are really distinct from one another. “God is one but not solitary.” [86] “Father”, “Son”, “Holy Spirit” are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: “He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son.” [87] They are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” [88] The divine Unity is Triune.

255 The divine persons are relative to one another. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: “In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance.” [89] Indeed “everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship.” [90] “Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.” [91]

256 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, also called “the Theologian”, entrusts this summary of Trinitarian faith to the catechumens of Constantinople: Above all guard for me this great deposit of faith for which I live and fight, which I want to take with me as a companion, and which makes me bear all evils and despise all pleasures: I mean the profession of faith in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I entrust it to you today. By it I am soon going to plunge you into water and raise you up from it. I give it to you as the companion and patron of your whole life. I give you but one divinity and power, existing one in three, and containing the three in a distinct way. Divinity without disparity of substance or nature, without superior degree that raises up or inferior degree that casts down. . . the infinite co-naturality of three infinities. Each person considered in himself is entirely God. . . the three considered together. . . I have not even begun to think of unity when the Trinity bathes me in its splendour. I have not even begun to think of the Trinity when unity grasps me. . [92]

IV. THE DIVINE WORKS AND THE TRINITARIAN MISSIONS

257 “O blessed light, O Trinity and first Unity!” [93] God is eternal blessedness, undying life, unfading light. God is love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life. Such is the “plan of his loving kindness”, conceived by the Father

before the foundation of the world, in his beloved Son: “He destined us in love to be his sons” and “to be conformed to the image of his Son”, through “the spirit of sonship”. [94] This plan is a “grace [which] was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”, stemming immediately from Trinitarian love. [95] It unfolds in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the missions of the Son and the Spirit, which are continued in the mission of the Church. [96]

258 The whole divine economy is the common work of the three divine persons. For as the Trinity has only one and the same natures so too does it have only one and the same operation: “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three principles of creation but one principle.” [97] However, each divine person performs the common work according to his unique personal property. Thus the Church confesses, following the New Testament, “one God and Father from whom all things are, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and one Holy Spirit in whom all things are”. [98] It is above all the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit that show forth the properties of the divine persons.

259 Being a work at once common and personal, the whole divine economy makes known both what is proper to the divine persons, and their one divine nature. Hence the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons, without in any way separating them. Everyone who glorifies the Father does so through the Son in the Holy Spirit; everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him. [99]

260 The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. [100] But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: “If a man loves me”, says the Lord, “he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him”: [101]

O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action. [102]

IN BRIEF

261 The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

262 The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God.

263 The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (Jn 14:26) and by the Son “from the Father” (Jn 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. “With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified” (Nicene Creed).

264 “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son” (St. Augustine, De Trin. 15, 26, 47: PL 42, 1095).

265 By the grace of Baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (cf. Paul VI, CPG # 9).

266 “Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal” (Athanasian Creed: DS 75; ND 16).

267 Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[53](#) Mt 28:19.

[54](#) St. Caesarius of Arles, Sermo 9, Exp. symb.: CCL 103, 47.

[55](#) Cf. Profession of faith of Pope Vigilius I (552): DS 415.

[56](#) GCD 43.

[57](#) GCD 47.

[58](#) Dei Filius 4: DS 3015.

[59](#) Cf. Dt 32:6; Mal 2:10.

[60](#) Ex 4:22.

[61](#) Cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 68:6.

[62](#) Cf. Is 66:13; Ps 131:2.

[63](#) Cf. Ps 27:10; Eph 3:14; Is 49:15.

[64](#) Mt 11-27.

[65](#) Jn 1:1; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.

[66](#) The English phrases “of one being” and “one in being” translate the Greek word homoousios, which was rendered in Latin by consubstantialis.

[67](#) Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; cf. DS 150.

[68](#) Cf. Gen 1:2; Nicene Creed (DS 150); Jn 14:17, 26; 16:13.

[69](#) Cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:14.

[70](#) Cf. Jn 7:39.

[71](#) Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150.

[72](#) Council of Toledo VI (638): DS 490.

[73](#) Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 527.

[74](#) Nicene Creed; cf. DS 150.

[75](#) Council of Florence (1439): DS 1300-1301.

[76](#) Cf. Leo I, Quam laudabiliter (447): DS 284.
[77](#) Jn 15:26; cf. AG 2.
[78](#) Council of Florence (1439): DS 1302.
[79](#) Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331.
[80](#) Cf. Council of Lyons II(1274): DS 850.
[81](#) 2 Cor 13:14; cf. I Cor 12:4 - 6; Eph 4:4-6.
[82](#) Paul VI, CPC # 2.
[83](#) Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 421.
[84](#) Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:26.
[85](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 804.
[86](#) Fides Damasi: DS 71.
[87](#) Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 530:25.
[88](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 804.
[89](#) Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 528.
[90](#) Council of Florence (1442): DS 1330.
[91](#) Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331.
[92](#) St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 40, 41: PG 36,417.
[93](#) LH, Hymn for Evening Prayer.
[94](#) Eph 1:4-5, 9; Rom 8:15, 29.
[95](#) 2 Tim 1:9-10.
[96](#) Cf. AG 2-9.
[97](#) Council of Florence (1442): DS 1331; cf. Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 421.
[98](#) Council of Constantinople II: DS 421.
[99](#) Cf. Jn 6:44; Rom 8:14.
[100](#) Cf. Jn 17:21-23.
[101](#) Jn 14:23.
[102](#) Prayer of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity.

Paragraph 3. THE ALMIGHTY

268 of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is loving, for he is our Father, and mysterious, for only faith can discern it when it "is made perfect in weakness". [[103](#)]

"He does whatever he pleases" [[104](#)]

269 The Holy Scriptures repeatedly confess the universal power of God. He is called the "Mighty One of Jacob", the "LORD of hosts", the "strong and mighty" one. If God is almighty "in heaven and on earth", it is because he made them. [[105](#)] Nothing is impossible with God, who disposes his works according to his will. [[106](#)] He is the Lord of the universe, whose order he established and which remains wholly subject to him and at his disposal. He is master of history, governing hearts and events in keeping with his will: "It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the strength of your arm?" [[107](#)]

“You are merciful to all, for you can do all thing” [108]

270 God is the Father Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us (“I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”): [109] finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

271 God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: “In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect.” [110]

The mystery of God's apparent powerlessness

272 Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus “the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” [111] It is in Christ's Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth “the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe”. [112]

273 Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power. [113] The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that “nothing will be impossible with God”, and was able to magnify the Lord: “For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” [114]

274 “Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God. Once our reason has grasped the idea of God's almighty power, it will easily and without any hesitation admit everything that [the Creed] will afterwards propose for us to believe - even if they be great and marvellous things, far above the ordinary laws of nature.” [115]

IN BRIEF

275 With Job, the just man, we confess: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

276 Faithful to the witness of Scripture, the Church often addresses her prayer to the “almighty and eternal God” (“omnipotens sempiternus Deus. . .”), believing firmly that “nothing will be impossible with God” (Gen 18:14; Lk 1:37; Mt 19:26).

277 God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. “God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness. . .” (Roman Missal, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer).

278 If we do not believe that God's love is almighty, how can we believe that the Father could create us, the Son redeem us and the Holy Spirit sanctify us?

[103](#) Cf. Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Mt 6:9; 2 Cor 12:9; cf. I Cor 1:18.

[104](#) Ps 115:3.

[105](#) Gen 49:24; Is 1:24 etc.; Pss 24:8-10; 135 6.

[106](#) Cf. Jer 27:5; 32:17; Lk 1:37

[107](#) Wis 11:21; cf. Esth 4:17b; Prov 21:1; Tob 13:2.

[108](#) Wis 11:23.

[109](#) 2 Cor 6:18; cf. Mt 6:32.

[110](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I, 25, 5, ad I.

[111](#) 1 Cor 1:24-25.

[112](#) Eph 1:19-22.

[113](#) Cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13.

[114](#) Lk 1:37, 49.

[115](#) Roman Catechism I, 2, 13

Paragraph 4. THE CREATOR

279 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” [\[116\]](#) Holy Scripture begins with these solemn words. the profession of faith takes them up when it confesses that God the Father almighty is “Creator of heaven and earth” (Apostles' Creed), “of all that is, seen and unseen” (Nicene Creed). We shall speak first of the Creator, then of creation and finally of the fall into sin from which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to raise us up again.

280 Creation is the foundation of “all God's saving plans,” the “beginning of the history of salvation” [\[117\]](#) that culminates in Christ. Conversely, the mystery of Christ casts conclusive light on the mystery of creation and reveals the end for which “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”: from the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ. [\[118\]](#)

281 And so the readings of the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the new creation in Christ, begin with the creation account; likewise in the Byzantine liturgy, the account of creation always constitutes the first reading at the vigils of the great feasts of the Lord. According to ancient witnesses the instruction of catechumens for Baptism followed the same itinerary. [\[119\]](#)

I. CATECHESIS ON CREATION

282 Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked themselves: [\[120\]](#) “Where do we come from?” “Where are we going?” “What is our origin?” “What is our end?” “Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?” the two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions.

283 The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers. With Solomon they can say: "It is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements. . . for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me." [121]

284 The great interest accorded to these studies is strongly stimulated by a question of another order, which goes beyond the proper domain of the natural sciences. It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called "God"? and if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil? Where does it come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?

285 Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions and cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism). Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God and returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, locked, in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is evil, the product of a fall, and is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watch-maker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism). All these attempts bear witness to the permanence and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

286 Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a response to the question of origins. the existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason, [122] even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error. This is why faith comes to confirm and enlighten reason in the correct understanding of this truth: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." [123]

287 The truth about creation is so important for all of human life that God in his tenderness wanted to reveal to his People everything that is salutary to know on the subject. Beyond the natural knowledge that every man can have of the Creator, [124] God progressively revealed to Israel the mystery of creation. He who chose the patriarchs, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and who by choosing Israel created and formed it, this same God reveals himself as the One to whom belong all the peoples of the earth, and the whole earth itself; he is the One who alone "made heaven and earth". [125]

288 Thus the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant, the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love. [126] and so, the truth of creation is also expressed with growing vigour in the message of the prophets, the prayer of the psalms and the liturgy, and in the wisdom sayings of the Chosen People. [127]

289 Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation - its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the "beginning": creation, fall, and promise of salvation.

II. CREATION - WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

290 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": [128] three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture: the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (the verb "create" - Hebrew bara - always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (expressed by the formula "the heavens and the earth") depends on the One who gives it being.

291 "In the beginning was the Word. . . and the Word was God. . . all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." [129] The New Testament reveals that God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." [130] The Church's faith likewise confesses the creative action of the Holy Spirit, the "giver of life", "the Creator Spirit" (Veni, Creator Spiritus), the "source of every good". [131]

292 The Old Testament suggests and the New Covenant reveals the creative action of the Son and the Spirit, [132] inseparably one with that of the Father. This creative co-operation is clearly affirmed in the Church's rule of faith: "There exists but one God. . . he is the Father, God, the Creator, the author, the giver of order. He made all things by himself, that is, by his Word and by his Wisdom", "by the Son and the Spirit" who, so to speak, are "his hands". [133] Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity.

III. "THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD"

293 Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: "The world was made for the glory of God." [134] St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things "not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it", [135] for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: "Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand." [136] The First Vatican Council explains:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and “almighty power”, not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel “and from the beginning of time, made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal. .” [137]

294 The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us “to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace”, [138] for “the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God.” [139] The ultimate purpose of creation is that God “who is the creator of all things may at last become “all in all”, thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude.” [140]

IV. THE MYSTERY OF CREATION

God creates by wisdom and love

295 We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. [141] It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: “For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” [142] Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all”; and “The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.” [143] God creates “out of nothing”

296 We believe that God needs no pre-existent thing or any help in order to create, nor is creation any sort of necessary emanation from the divine substance. [144] God creates freely “out of nothing”: [145]

If God had drawn the world from pre-existent matter, what would be so extraordinary in that? A human artisan makes from a given material whatever he wants, while God shows his power by starting from nothing to make all he wants. [146]

297 Scripture bears witness to faith in creation “out of nothing” as a truth full of promise and hope. Thus the mother of seven sons encourages them for martyrdom:

I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws. . . Look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind comes into being. [147]

298 Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them, [148] and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” [149] and since God was able to make light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him. [150]

God creates an ordered and good world

299 Because God creates through wisdom, his creation is ordered: “You have arranged all things by measure and number and weight.” [151] The universe, created in and by the eternal Word, the “image of the invisible God”, is destined for and addressed to man, himself created in the “image of God” and called to a personal relationship with God. [152] Our human understanding, which shares in the light of the divine intellect, can understand what God tells us by means of his creation, though not without great effort and only in a spirit of humility and respect before the Creator and his work. [153] Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness - “and God saw that it was good. . . very good” [154]- for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him. On many occasions the Church has had to defend the goodness of creation, including that of the physical world. [155]

God transcends creation and is present to it

300 God is infinitely greater than all his works: “You have set your glory above the heavens.” [156] Indeed, God's “greatness is unsearchable”. [157] But because he is the free and sovereign Creator, the first cause of all that exists, God is present to his creatures' inmost being: “In him we live and move and have our being.” [158] In the words of St. Augustine, God is “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self”. [159]

God upholds and sustains creation

301 With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence:

For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living. [160]

V. GOD CARRIES OUT HIS PLAN: DIVINE PROVIDENCE

302 Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. the universe was created “in a state of journeying” (in statu viae)

toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. We call “divine providence” the dispositions by which God guides his creation toward this perfection:

By his providence God protects and governs all things which he has made, “reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well”. For “all are open and laid bare to his eyes”, even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures. [161]

303 The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is concrete and immediate; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: “Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.” [162] and so it is with Christ, “who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens”. [163] As the book of Proverbs states: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established.” [164]

304 And so we see the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Sacred Scripture, often attributing actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a “primitive mode of speech”, but a profound way of recalling God's primacy and absolute Lordship over history and the world, [165] and so of educating his people to trust in him. The prayer of the Psalms is the great school of this trust. [166]

305 Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?”. . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” [167]

Providence and secondary causes

306 God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan.

307 To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of “subduing” the earth and having dominion over it. [168] God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbours. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers and their sufferings. [169] They then fully become “God's fellow workers” and co-workers for his kingdom. [170]

308 The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” [171] Far from diminishing the

creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes." [172] Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace. [173]

Providence and the scandal of evil

309 If God the Father almighty, the Creator of the ordered and good world, cares for all his creatures, why does evil exist? To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question: the goodness of creation, the drama of sin and the patient love of God who comes to meet man by his covenants, the redemptive Incarnation of his Son, his gift of the Spirit, his gathering of the Church, the power of the sacraments and his call to a blessed life to which free creatures are invited to consent in advance, but from which, by a terrible mystery, they can also turn away in advance. There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.

310 But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? With infinite power God could always create something better. [174] But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world "in a state of journeying" towards its ultimate perfection. In God's plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also physical evil as long as creation has not reached perfection. [175]

311 Angels and men, as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love. They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned. Thus has moral evil, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil, entered the world. God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. [176] He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it:

For almighty God. . . , because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself. [177]

312 In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: "It was not you", said Joseph to his brothers, "who sent me here, but God. . . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." [178] From the greatest moral evil ever committed - the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men - God, by his grace that "abounded all the more", [179] brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good.

313 "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him." [180] The constant witness of the saints confirms this truth:

St. Catherine of Siena said to “those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them”: “Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind.” [181] St. Thomas More, shortly before his martyrdom, consoled his daughter: “Nothing can come but that that God wills. and I make me very sure that whatsoever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be the best.” [182] Dame Julian of Norwich: “Here I was taught by the grace of God that I should steadfastly keep me in the faith... and that at the same time I should take my stand on and earnestly believe in what our Lord shewed in this time - that 'all manner (of) thing shall be well.’” [183]

314 We firmly believe that God is master of the world and of its history. But the ways of his providence are often unknown to us. Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God “face to face”, [184] will we fully know the ways by which - even through the dramas of evil and sin - God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest [185] for which he created heaven and earth.

IN BRIEF

315 In the creation of the world and of man, God gave the first and universal witness to his almighty love and his wisdom, the first proclamation of the “plan of his loving goodness”, which finds its goal in the new creation in Christ.

316 Though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a truth of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are the one, indivisible principle of creation.

317 God alone created the universe, freely, directly and without any help.

318 No creature has the infinite power necessary to “create” in the proper sense of the word, that is, to produce and give being to that which had in no way possessed it to call into existence “out of nothing”) (cf DS 3624).

319 God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them.

320 God created the universe and keeps it in existence by his Word, the Son “upholding the universe by his word of power” (Heb 1:3), and by his Creator Spirit, the giver of life.

321 Divine providence consists of the dispositions by which God guides all his creatures with wisdom and love to their ultimate end.

322 Christ invites us to filial trust in the providence of our heavenly Father (cf Mt 6:26-34), and St. Peter the apostle repeats: “Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you” (I Pt 5:7; cf. Ps 55:23).

323 Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to co-operate freely with his plans.

324 The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life.

[116](#) Gen 1:1.

[117](#) GCD 51.

[118](#) Gen 1:1; cf. Rom 8:18-23.

[119](#) Cf. Egeria, Peregrinatio at loca sancta 46: PLS 1, 1047; St. Augustine, De catechizantis rudibus 3, 5: PL 40, 256.

[120](#) Cf. NA 2.

[121](#) Wis 7: 17-22.

[122](#) Cf. Vatican Council I, can. 2 # I: DS 3026.

[123](#) Heb 11:3.

[124](#) Cf. Acts 17:24-29; Rom 1:19-20.

[125](#) Cf. Is 43:1; Pss 115:15; 124:8; 134:3.

[126](#) Cf. Gen 15:5; Jer 33:19-26.

[127](#) Cf. Is 44:24; Ps 104; Prov 8:22-31.

[128](#) Gen 1:1.

[129](#) Jn 1:1-3.

[130](#) Col 1:16-17.

[131](#) Cf. Nicene Creed: DS 150; Hymn Veni, Creator Spiritus; Byzantine Troparion of Pentecost Vespers, "O heavenly King, Consoler".

[132](#) Cf. Pss 33 6; 104:30; Gen 1:2-3.

[133](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 2, 30, 9; 4, 20, I: PG 7/1, 822, 1032.

[134](#) Dei Filius, can. # 5: DS 3025.

[135](#) St. Bonaventure, In II Sent. I, 2, 2, 1.

[136](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, Sent. II, prol.

[137](#) Dei Filius I: DS 3002; cf Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800.

[138](#) Eph 1:5-6.

[139](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 4, 20, 7: PG 7/1, 1037.

[140](#) AG 2; cf. I Cor 15:28.

[141](#) Cf. Wis 9:9.

[142](#) Rev 4:11.

[143](#) Pss 104:24; 145:9.

[144](#) Cf. Dei Filius, cann. 2-4: DS 3022-3024.

[145](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3025.

[146](#) St. Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycom II, 4: PG 6, 1052.

[147](#) 2 Macc 7:22-21, 28.

[148](#) Cf. Ps 51:12.

[149](#) Rom 4:17.

[150](#) Cf. Gen 1:3; 2 Cor 4:6.

[151](#) Wis 11:20.

[152](#) Col 1:15, Gen 1:26.

[153](#) Cf. Ps 19:2-5; Job 42:3.

- [154](#) Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 31.
[155](#) Cf. DS 286; 455-463; 800; 1333; 3002.
[156](#) Ps 8:1; cf. Sir 43:28.
[157](#) Ps 145:3.
[158](#) Acts 17:28.
[159](#) St. Augustine, Conf: 3, 6, 11: PL 32, 688.
[160](#) Wis 11:24-26.
[161](#) Vatican Council I, Dei Filius I: DS 3003; cf. Wis 8:1; Heb 4:13.
[162](#) Ps 115:3.
[163](#) Rev 3:7.
[164](#) Prov 19:21.
[165](#) Cf. Is 10:5-15; 45:51; Dt 32:39; Sir 11:14.
[166](#) Cf. Pss 22; 32; 35; 103; 138; et al.
[167](#) Mt 6:31-33; cf 10:29-31.
[168](#) Cf. Gen 1:26-28.
[169](#) Cf. Col 1:24.
[170](#) I Cor 3:9; I Th 3:2; Col 4:11.
[171](#) Phil 2:13; cf. I Cor 12:6.
[172](#) GS 36 # 3.
[173](#) Cf. Mt 19:26; Jn 15:5; 14:13
[174](#) Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I, 25, 6.
[175](#) Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, SCG III, 71.
[176](#) Cf. St. Augustine, De libero arbitrio I, 1, 2: PL 32, 1221- 1223; St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I-II, 79, 1.
[177](#) St. Augustine, Enchiridion II, 3: PL 40, 236.
[178](#) Gen 45:8; 50:20; cf. Tob 2:12 (Vulgate).
[179](#) Cf. Rom 5:20.
[180](#) Rom 8:28.
[181](#) St. Catherine of Siena, Dialogue IV, 138 “On Divine Providence”.
[182](#) The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), letter 206, lines 661-663.
[183](#) Julian of Norwich, the Revelations of Divine Love, tr. James Walshe SJ (London: 1961), ch. 32, 99-100.
[184](#) I Cor 13:12.
[185](#) Cf. Gen 2:2.
-

Paragraph 5. HEAVEN AND EARTH

325 The Apostles' Creed professes that God is “creator of heaven and earth”. the Nicene Creed makes it explicit that this profession includes “all that is, seen and unseen”.

326 The Scriptural expression “heaven and earth” means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: “the earth” is the world of men, while “heaven” or “the heavens” can designate both the firmament and God's own “place” - “our Father in heaven” and consequently

the “heaven” too which is eschatological glory. Finally, “heaven” refers to the saints and the “place” of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God. [\[186\]](#)

327 The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirms that God “from the beginning of time made at once (simul) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (deinde) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body.” [\[187\]](#)

I. THE ANGELS

The existence of angels - a truth of faith

328 The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls “angels” is a truth of faith. the witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.

Who are they?

329 St. Augustine says: “Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel.’” [\[188\]](#) With their whole beings the angels are servants and messengers of God. Because they “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” they are the “mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word”. [\[189\]](#)

330 As purely spiritual creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendour of their glory bears witness. [\[190\]](#)

Christ “with all his angels”

331 Christ is the centre of the angelic world. They are his angels: “When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. . .” [\[191\]](#) They belong to him because they were created through and for him: “for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him.” [\[192\]](#) They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?” [\[193\]](#)

332 Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples. [\[194\]](#) Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself. [\[195\]](#)

333 From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God “brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all

God's angels worship him." [196] Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" [197] They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been. [198] Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection. [199] They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement. [200]

The angels in the life of the Church

334 In the meantime, the whole life of the Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels. [201]

335 In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the Roman Canon's *Supplices te rogamus*. . . ["Almighty God, we pray that your angel..."]; in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*. . . ["May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ."]). Moreover, in the "Cherubic Hymn" of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels).

336 From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. [202] "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." [203] Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

II. THE VISIBLE WORLD

337 God himself created the visible world in all its richness, diversity and order. Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six days of divine "work", concluded by the "rest" of the seventh day. [204] On the subject of creation, the sacred text teaches the truths revealed by God for our salvation, [205] permitting us to "recognize the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God." [206]

338 Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator. the world began when God's word drew it out of nothingness; all existent beings, all of nature, and all human history are rooted in this primordial event, the very genesis by which the world was constituted and time begun. [207]

339 Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "and God saw that it was good." "By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws." [208] Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.

340 God wills the interdependence of creatures. the sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.

341 The beauty of the universe: the order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them. Man discovers them progressively as the laws of nature. They call forth the admiration of scholars. the beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man's intellect and will.

342 The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the “six days”, from the less perfect to the more perfect. God loves all his creatures [209] and takes care of each one, even the sparrow. Nevertheless, Jesus said: “You are of more value than many sparrows”, or again: “of how much more value is a man than a sheep!” [210]

343 Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures. [211]

344 There is a solidarity among all creatures arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory: May you be praised, O Lord, in all your creatures, especially brother sun, by whom you give us light for the day; he is beautiful, radiating great splendour, and offering us a symbol of you, the Most High. . .

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister water, who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste. May you be praised, my Lord, for sister earth, our mother, who bears and feeds us, and produces the variety of fruits and dappled flowers and grasses. . . Praise and bless my Lord, give thanks and serve him in all humility. [212]

345 The sabbath - the end of the work of the six days. the sacred text says that “on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done”, that the “heavens and the earth were finished”, and that God “rested” on this day and sanctified and blessed it. [213] These inspired words are rich in profitable instruction:

346 In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant. [214] For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it.

347 Creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation. [215] As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over “the work of God”, that is, solemn worship. [216] This indicates the right order of human concerns.

348 The sabbath is at the heart of Israel's law. To keep the commandments is to correspond to the wisdom and the will of God as expressed in his work of creation.

349 The eighth day. But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. the seventh day completes the first creation. the eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. the first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation. [217]

IN BRIEF

350 Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: “The angels work together for the benefit of us all” (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh I, 114, 3, ad 3).

351 The angels surround Christ their Lord. They serve him especially in the accomplishment of his saving mission to men.

352 The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being.

353 God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence and their order. He destined all material creatures for the good of the human race. Man, and through him all creation, is destined for the glory of God.

354 Respect for laws inscribed in creation and the relations which derive from the nature of things is a principle of wisdom and a foundation for morality.

[186](#) Pss 115:16; 19:2; Mt 5:16.

[187](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800; cf. DS 3002 and Paul VI, CPG # 8.

[188](#) St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 103, 1, 15: PL 37, 1348.

[189](#) Mt 18:10; Ps 103:20.

[190](#) Cf. Pius XII, Humani generis: DS 3891; Lk 20:36; Dan 10:9- 12.

[191](#) Mt 25:31.

[192](#) Col 1:16.

[193](#) Heb 1:14.

[194](#) Cf. Job 38:7 (where angels are called “sons of God”); Gen 3:24; 19; 21: 17; 22:11; Acts 7:53; Ex 23:20-23; Judg 13; 6:11-24; Is 6:6; 1 Kings 19:5.

[195](#) Cf. Lk 1:11, 26.

[196](#) Heb 1:6.

[197](#) Lk 2:14.

[198](#) Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13, 19; 4:11; 26:53; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; Macc 10:29-30; 11:8.

[199](#) Cf. Lk 2:8-14; Mk 16:5-7.

[200](#) Cf. Acts 1:10-11; Mt 13:41; 24:31; Lk 12:8-9. the angels in the life of the Church

[201](#) Cf. Acts 5:18-20; 8:26-29; 10:3-8; 12:6-11; 27:23-25.

[202](#) Cf. Mt 18:10; Lk 16:22; Pss 34:7; 91:10-13; Job 33:23-24; Zech 1:12; Tob 12:12.

[203](#) St. Basil, Adv. Eunomium III, I: PG 29, 656B.

[204](#) Gen 1:1 - 2:4.

[205](#) Cf. DV 11.
[206](#) LG 36 # 2.
[207](#) Cf. St. Augustine, De Genesi adv. Man 1, 2, 4: PL 34, 175.
[208](#) GS 36 # 1.
[209](#) Cf. Ps 145:9.
[210](#) Lk 12:6-7; Mt 12:12.
[211](#) Cf. Gen 1-26.
[212](#) St. Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Creatures.
[213](#) Gen 2:1-3.
[214](#) Cf. Heb 4:3-4; Jer 31:35-37; 33:19-26.
[215](#) Cf. Gen 1:14.
[216](#) St. Benedict, Regula 43, 3: PL 66, 675-676.
[217](#) Cf. Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 24, prayer after the first reading.

Paragraph 6. MAN

355 “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” [\[218\]](#) Man occupies a unique place in creation: (I) he is “in the image of God”; (II) in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; (III) he is created “male and female”; (IV) God established him in his friendship.

I. “IN THE IMAGE OF GOD”

356 of all visible creatures only man is “able to know and love his creator”. [\[219\]](#) He is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake”, [\[220\]](#) and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity: What made you establish man in so great a dignity? Certainly the incalculable love by which you have looked on your creature in yourself! You are taken with love for her; for by love indeed you created her, by love you have given her a being capable of tasting your eternal Good. [\[221\]](#)

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

358 God created everything for man, [\[222\]](#) but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him: What is it that is about to be created, that enjoys such honour? It is man that great and wonderful living creature, more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures! For him the heavens and the earth, the sea and all the rest of creation exist. God attached so much importance to his salvation that he did not spare his own Son for the sake of man. Nor does he ever cease to work, trying every possible means, until he has raised man up to himself and made him sit at his right hand. [\[223\]](#)

359 “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear.” [224]

St. Paul tells us that the human race takes its origin from two men: Adam and Christ. . . the first man, Adam, he says, became a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. the first Adam was made by the last Adam, from whom he also received his soul, to give him life... the second Adam stamped his image on the first Adam when he created him. That is why he took on himself the role and the name of the first Adam, in order that he might not lose what he had made in his own image. the first Adam, the last Adam: the first had a beginning, the last knows no end. the last Adam is indeed the first; as he himself says: “I am the first and the last.” [225]

360 Because of its common origin the human race forms a unity, for “from one ancestor (God) made all nations to inhabit the whole earth”: [226]

O wondrous vision, which makes us contemplate the human race in the unity of its origin in God. . . in the unity of its nature, composed equally in all men of a material body and a spiritual soul; in the unity of its immediate end and its mission in the world; in the unity of its dwelling, the earth, whose benefits all men, by right of nature, may use to sustain and develop life; in the unity of its supernatural end: God himself, to whom all ought to tend; in the unity of the means for attaining this end;. . . in the unity of the redemption wrought by Christ for all. [227]

361 “This law of human solidarity and charity”, [228] without excluding the rich variety of persons, cultures and peoples, assures us that all men are truly brethren.

II. “BODY AND SOUL BUT TRULY ONE”

362 The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual. the biblical account expresses this reality in symbolic language when it affirms that “then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” [229] Man, whole and entire, is therefore willed by God.

363 In Sacred Scripture the term “soul” often refers to human life or the entire human person. [230] But “soul” also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, [231] that by which he is most especially in God's image: “soul” signifies the spiritual principle in man.

364 The human body shares in the dignity of “the image of God”: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit: [232]

Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity. Through his very bodily condition he sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honour since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day [233]

365 The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the “form” of the body: [234] i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.

366 The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not “produced” by the parents - and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection. [235]

367 Sometimes the soul is distinguished from the spirit: St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people “wholly”, with “spirit and soul and body” kept sound and blameless at the Lord's coming. [236] The Church teaches that this distinction does not introduce a duality into the soul. [237] “Spirit” signifies that from creation man is ordered to a supernatural end and that his soul can gratuitously be raised beyond all it deserves to communion with God. [238]

368 The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the heart, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God. [239]

III. “MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM”

Equality and difference willed by God

369 Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. “Being man” or “being woman” is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. [240] Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity “in the image of God”. In their “being-man” and “being-woman”, they reflect the Creator's wisdom and goodness.

370 In no way is God in man's image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective “perfections” of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband. [241]

“Each for the other” - “A unity in two”

371 God created man and woman together and willed each for the other. the Word of God gives us to understand this through various features of the sacred text. “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.” [242] None of the animals can be man's partner. [243] The woman God “fashions” from the man's rib and brings to him elicits on the man's part a cry of wonder, an exclamation of love and communion: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” [244] Man discovers woman as another “I”, sharing the same humanity.

372 Man and woman were made “for each other” - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be “helpmate” to

the other, for they are equal as persons (“bone of my bones. . .”) and complementary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way that, by forming “one flesh”, [245] they can transmit human life: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” [246] By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents co-operate in a unique way in the Creator's work. [247]

373 In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of “subduing” the earth [248] as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator “who loves everything that exists”, [249] to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.

IV. MAN IN PARADISE

374 The first man was not only created good, but was also established in friendship with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him, in a state that would be surpassed only by the glory of the new creation in Christ.

375 The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original “state of holiness and justice”. [250] This grace of original holiness was “to share in. . .divine life”. [251]

376 By the radiance of this grace all dimensions of man's life were confirmed. As long as he remained in the divine intimacy, man would not have to suffer or die. [252] The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, [253] and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation, comprised the state called “original justice”.

377 The “mastery” over the world that God offered man from the beginning was realized above all within man himself: mastery of self. the first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscence [254] that subjugates him to the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion, contrary to the dictates of reason.

378 The sign of man's familiarity with God is that God places him in the garden. [255] There he lives “to till it and keep it”. Work is not yet a burden, [256] but rather the collaboration of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation.

379 This entire harmony of original justice, foreseen for man in God's plan, will be lost by the sin of our first parents.

IN BRIEF

380 “Father,. . . you formed man in your own likeness and set him over the whole world to serve you, his creator, and to rule over all creatures” (Roman Missal, EP IV, 118).

381 Man is predestined to reproduce the image of God's Son made man, the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), so that Christ shall be the first-born of a multitude of brothers and sisters (cf Eph 1:3-6; Rom 8:29).

382 "Man, though made of body and soul, is a unity" (GS 14 # 1). the doctrine of the faith affirms that the spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God.

383 "God did not create man a solitary being. From the beginning, "male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons" (GS 12 # 4).

384 Revelation makes known to us the state of original holiness and justice of man and woman before sin: from their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise.

[218](#) Gen 1:27.

[219](#) GS 12 # 3.

[220](#) GS 24 # 3.

[221](#) St. Catherine of Siena, Dialogue IV, 13 "On Divine Providence": LH, Sunday, week 19, OR.

[222](#) Cf. GS 12 # 1; 24 # 3; 39 # 1.

[223](#) St. John Chrysostom, In Gen. sermo 2, 1: PG 54, 587D-588A.

[224](#) GS 22 # 1.

[225](#) St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermo 117: PL 52, 520-521.

[226](#) Acts 17:26; cf. Tob 8:6.

[227](#) Pius XII. Enc. Summi pontificatus 3; cf. NA 1.

[228](#) Pius XII Summi pontificatus 3.

[229](#) Gen 2:7.

[230](#) Cf. Mt 16:25-26; Jn 15:13; Acts 2:41

[231](#) Cf. Mt 10:28; 26:38; Jn 12:27; 2 Macc 6 30.

[232](#) Cf. I Cor 6:19-20; 15:44-45.

[233](#) GS 14 # 1; cf. Dan 3:57-80.

[234](#) Cf. Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902.

[235](#) Cf. Pius XII, Humani generis: DS 3896; Paul VI, CPC # 8; Lateran Council V (1513): DS 1440.

[236](#) 1 Th 5:23.

[237](#) Cf. Council of Constantinople IV (870): DS 657.

[238](#) Cf. Vatican Council I, Dei Filius: DS 3005; GS 22 # 5; Humani generis: DS 3891.

[239](#) Cf. Jer 31:33; Dt 6:5; 29:3; Is 29:13; Ezek 36:26; Mt 6:21; Lk 8:15; Rom 5:5.

[240](#) Cf. Gen 2:7, 22.

[241](#) Cf. Is 49:14-15; 66: 13; Ps 131:2-3;] Hos 11:1-4; Jer 3:4- 19.

[242](#) Gen 2:18.

[243](#)] Gen 2:19-20.

[244](#) Gen 2:23

[245](#) Gen 2:24

[246](#) Gen 1:28.

[247](#) Cf. GS 50 # 1.
[248](#) Gen 1:28.
[249](#) Wis 11:24.
[250](#) Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511.
[251](#) Cf. LG 2.
[252](#) Cf. Gen 2:17; 3:16, 19.
[253](#) Cf. Gen 2:25.
[254](#) Cf. I Jn 2:16.
[255](#) Cf. Gen 2:8.
[256](#) Gen 2:15; cf. 3:17-19

Paragraph 7. THE FALL

385 God is infinitely good and all his works are good. Yet no one can escape the experience of suffering or the evils in nature which seem to be linked to the limitations proper to creatures: and above all to the question of moral evil. Where does evil come from? “I sought whence evil comes and there was no solution”, said St. Augustine, [\[257\]](#) and his own painful quest would only be resolved by his conversion to the living God. For “the mystery of lawlessness” is clarified only in the light of the “mystery of our religion”. [\[258\]](#) The revelation of divine love in Christ manifested at the same time the extent of evil and the superabundance of grace. [\[259\]](#) We must therefore approach the question of the origin of evil by fixing the eyes of our faith on him who alone is its conqueror. [\[260\]](#)

I. WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE

The reality of sin

386 Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the profound relation of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history.

387 Only the light of divine Revelation clarifies the reality of sin and particularly of the sin committed at mankind's origins. Without the knowledge Revelation gives of God we cannot recognize sin clearly and are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure, etc. Only in the knowledge of God's plan for man can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.

Original sin - an essential truth of the faith

388 With the progress of Revelation, the reality of sin is also illuminated. Although to some extent the People of God in the Old Testament had tried to understand the pathos of the human

condition in the light of the history of the fall narrated in Genesis, they could not grasp this story's ultimate meaning, which is revealed only in the light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. [261] We must know Christ as the source of grace in order to know Adam as the source of sin. the Spirit-Paraclete, sent by the risen Christ, came to “convict the world concerning sin”, [262] by revealing him who is its Redeemer.

389 The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the “reverse side” of the Good News that Jesus is the Saviour of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. the Church, which has the mind of Christ, [263] knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.

How to read the account of the fall

390 The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. [264] Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents. [265]

II. THE FALL OF THE ANGELS

391 Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. [266] Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called “Satan” or the “devil”. [267] The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: “The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing.” [268]

392 Scripture speaks of a sin of these angels. [269] This “fall” consists in the free choice of these created spirits, who radically and irrevocably rejected God and his reign. We find a reflection of that rebellion in the tempter's words to our first parents: “You will be like God.” [270] The devil “has sinned from the beginning”; he is “a liar and the father of lies”. [271]

393 It is the irrevocable character of their choice, and not a defect in the infinite divine mercy, that makes the angels' sin unforgivable. “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.” [272]

394 Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls “a murderer from the beginning”, who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father. [273] “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” [274] In its consequences the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God.

395 The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries - of a spiritual nature and, indirectly, even of a physical nature - to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence which

with strength and gentleness guides human and cosmic history. It is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity, but “we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him.” [275]

III. ORIGINAL SIN

Freedom put to the test

396 God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. the prohibition against eating “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” spells this out: “for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die.” [276] The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” [277] symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom.

Man's first sin

397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. [278] All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

398 In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully “divinized” by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to “be like God”, but “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God”. [279]

399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. [280] They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives. [281]

400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. [282] Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. [283] Because of man, creation is now subject “to its bondage to decay”. [284] Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will “return to the ground”, [285] for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history. [286]

401 After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated by sin There is Cain's murder of his brother Abel and the universal corruption which follows in the wake of sin. Likewise, sin frequently manifests itself in the history of Israel, especially as infidelity to the God of the Covenant and as transgression of the Law of Moses. and even after Christ's atonement, sin raises

its head in countless ways among Christians. [287] Scripture and the Church's Tradition continually recall the presence and universality of sin in man's history:

What Revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience. For when man looks into his own heart he finds that he is drawn towards what is wrong and sunk in many evils which cannot come from his good creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his source, man has also upset the relationship which should link him to his last end, and at the same time he has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures. [288]

The consequences of Adam's sin for humanity

402 All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St. Paul affirms: "By one man's disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners": "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." [289] The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men." [290]

403 Following St. Paul, the Church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adam's sin and the fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul". [291] Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin. [292]

404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? the whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man". [293] By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. [294] It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. and that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.

405 Although it is proper to each individual, [295] original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin - an inclination to evil that is called concupiscence". Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.

406 The Church's teaching on the transmission of original sin was articulated more precisely in the fifth century, especially under the impulse of St. Augustine's reflections against Pelagianism, and in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the Protestant Reformation. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life; he thus reduced the influence of Adam's fault to bad example. The first Protestant reformers, on the contrary, taught that original sin has radically perverted man and destroyed his freedom; they identified the sin inherited by each man with the tendency to evil (concupiscentia), which would be insurmountable. The Church pronounced on the meaning of the data of Revelation on original sin especially at the second Council of Orange (529) [296] and at the Council of Trent (1546). [297]

A hard battle. . .

407 The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil". [298] Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action [299] and morals.

408 The consequences of original sin and of all men's personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition aptly described in St. John's expression, "the sin of the world". [300] This expression can also refer to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins. [301]

409 This dramatic situation of "the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one" [302] makes man's life a battle:

The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity. [303]

IV. "YOU DID NOT ABANDON HIM TO THE POWER OF DEATH"

410 After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall. [304] This passage in Genesis is called the Protoevangelium ("first gospel"): the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a descendant of hers.

411 The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience, of Adam. [305] Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the "Proto-evangelium" as Mary, the mother of Christ, the "new Eve". Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved

from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life. [306]

412 But why did God not prevent the first man from sinning? St. Leo the Great responds, “Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away.” [307] and St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault, . . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!’” [308]

IN BRIEF

413 “God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. . . It was through the devil's envy that death entered the world” (Wis 1:13; 2:24).

414 Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God.

415 “Although set by God in a state of rectitude man, enticed by the evil one, abused his freedom at the very start of history. He lifted himself up against God, and sought to attain his goal apart from him” (GS 13 # 1).

416 By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings.

417 Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called “original sin”.

418 As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called “concupiscence”).

419 “We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, “by propagation, not by imitation” and that it is. . . 'proper to each’” (Paul VI, CPG # 16).

420 The victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us: “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20).

421 Christians believe that “the world has been established and kept in being by the Creator's love; has fallen into slavery to sin but has been set free by Christ, crucified and risen to break the power of the evil one. . .” (GS 2 # 2).

[257](#) St. Augustine, Conf. 7, 7, 11: PL 32, 739.

[258](#) 2 Th 2:7; I Tim 3:16.

[259](#) Cf. Rom 5:20.
[260](#) Cf. Lk 11:21-22; Jn 16:11; I Jn 3:8.
[261](#) Cf. Rom 5:12-21.
[262](#) Jn 16:8.
[263](#) Cf. I Cor 2:16.
[264](#) Cf. GS 13 # 1.
[265](#) Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1513; Pius XII: DS 3897; Paul VI: AAS 58 (1966), 654.
[266](#) Cf. Gen 3:1-5; Wis 2:24.
[267](#) Cf Jn 8:44; Rev 12:9.
[268](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 800.
[269](#) Cf. 2 Pt 2:4.
[270](#) Gen 3:5.
[271](#) I Jn 3:8; Jn 8:44.
[272](#) St. John Damascene, Defide orth. 2, 4: PG 94, 877.
[273](#) Jn 8:44; cf. Mt 4:1-11.
[274](#) I Jn 3:8.
[275](#) Rom 8:28.
[276](#) Gen 2:17.
[277](#) Gen 2:17.
[278](#) Cf. Gen 3:1-11 ; Rom 5:19.
[279](#) St. Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua: PG 91, 1156C; cf. Gen 3:5.
[280](#) Cf. Rom 3:23.
[281](#) Cf. Gen 3:5-10.
[282](#) Cf. Gen 3:7-16.
[283](#) Cf. Gen 3:17, 19.
[284](#) Rom 8:21.
[285](#) Gen 3:19; cf. 2:17.
[286](#) Cf. Rom 5:12.
[287](#) Cf. Gen 4:3-15; 6:5, 12; Rom 1:18-32; I Cor 1-6; Rev 2-3.
[288](#) GS 13 # 1.
[289](#) Rom 5:12, 19.
[290](#) Rom 5:18.
[291](#) Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1512.
[292](#) Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1514.
[293](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, De malo 4, I.
[294](#) Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1511-1512
[295](#) Cf. Council of Trent: DS 1513.
[296](#) DS 371-372.
[297](#) Cf. DS 1510-1516.
[298](#) Council of Trent (1546): DS 1511; cf. Heb 2:14.
[299](#) Cf. John Paul II, CA 25.
[300](#) Jn 1:29.
[301](#) Cf. John Paul II, RP 16.
[302](#) I Jn 5:19; cf. I Pt 5:8.
[303](#) GS 37 3 2.
[304](#) Cf. Gen 3:9, 15.

[305](#) Cf. I Cor 15:21-22, 45; Phil 2:8; Rom 5:19-20.

[306](#) Cf. Pius IX's Ineffabilis Deus: DS 2803; Council of Trent: DS 1573.

[307](#) St. Leo the Great, Sermo 73, 4: PL 54, 396.

[308](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, I, 3, ad 3; cf. Rom 5:20.

CHAPTER TWO

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SON OF GOD

The Good News: God has sent his Son

422 'But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.' [\[1\]](#) This is 'the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God': [\[2\]](#) God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own 'beloved Son'. [\[3\]](#)

423 We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He 'came from God', [\[4\]](#) 'descended from heaven', [\[5\]](#) and 'came in the flesh'. [\[6\]](#) For 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.' [\[7\]](#)

424 Moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit and drawn by the Father, we believe in Jesus and confess: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' [\[8\]](#) On the rock of this faith confessed by St. Peter, Christ built his Church. [\[9\]](#) "To preach. . . the unsearchable riches of Christ" [\[10\]](#)

425 The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." [\[11\]](#) It and they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. and we are writing this that our joy may be complete. [\[12\]](#)

At the heart of catechesis: Christ

426 "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father. . . who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living

with us forever.” [13] To catechize is “to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfilment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him.” [14] Catechesis aims at putting “people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” [15]

427 In catechesis “Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, . . . is taught - everything else is taught with reference to him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. . . Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'” [16]

428 Whoever is called “to teach Christ” must first seek “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus”; he must suffer “the loss of all things. . .” in order to “gain Christ and be found in him”, and “to know him and the power of his resurrection, and (to) share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible (he) may attain the resurrection from the dead”. [17]

429 From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to “evangelize”, and to lead others to the “yes” of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt. To this end, following the order of the Creed, Jesus' principal titles - “Christ”, “Son of God”, and “Lord” (article 2) - will be presented. the Creed next confesses the chief mysteries of his life - those of his Incarnation (article 3), Paschal mystery (articles 4 and 5) and glorification (articles 6 and 7).

[1](#) Gal 4:4-5.

[2](#) Mk 1:1.

[3](#) Mk 1:11; cf. Lk 1:5, 68.

[4](#) Jn 13:3.

[5](#) Jn 3:13; 6:33.

[6](#) 1 Jn 4:2.

[7](#) Jn 1:14,16.

[8](#) Mt 16:16.

[9](#) Cf. Mt 16:18; St. Leo the Great, Sermo 4 3: PL 54,150 - 152; 51,1: PL 54, 309B; 62, 2: PL 54, 350-351; 83, 3: PL 54, 431-432.

[10](#) Eph 3:8.

[11](#) Acts 4:20.

[12](#) 1 Jn 1:1-4.

[13](#) CT 5.

[14](#) CT 5.

[15](#) CT 5.

[16](#) CT 6; cf. Jn 7:16.

[17](#) Phil 3:8-11.

“AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD”

I. Jesus

430 Jesus means in Hebrew: “God saves.” At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel gave him the name Jesus as his proper name, which expresses both his identity and his mission. [18] Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, “will save his people from their sins”. [19] in Jesus, God recapitulates all of his history of salvation on behalf of men.

431 In the history of salvation God was not content to deliver Israel “out of the house of bondage” [20] by bringing them out of Egypt. He also saves them from their sin. Because sin is always an offence against God, only he can forgive it. [21] For this reason Israel, becoming more and more aware of the universality of sin, will no longer be able to seek salvation except by invoking the name of the Redeemer God. [22]

432 The name “Jesus” signifies that the very name of God is present in the person of his Son, made man for the universal and definitive redemption from sins. It is the divine name that alone brings salvation, and henceforth all can invoke his name, for Jesus united himself to all men through his Incarnation, [23] so that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” [24]

433 The name of the Saviour God was invoked only once in the year by the high priest in atonement for the sins of Israel, after he had sprinkled the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies with the sacrificial blood. the mercy seat was the place of God's presence. [25] When St. Paul speaks of Jesus whom “God put forward as an expiation by his blood”, he means that in Christ's humanity “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” [26]

434 Jesus' Resurrection glorifies the name of the Saviour God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the “name which is above every name”. [27] The evil spirits fear his name; in his name his disciples perform miracles, for the Father grants all they ask in this name. [28]

435 The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer. All liturgical prayers conclude with the words “through our Lord Jesus Christ”. the Hail Mary reaches its high point in the words “blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” the Eastern prayer of the heart, the Jesus Prayer, says: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Many Christians, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died with the one word “Jesus” on their lips.

[18] Cf. Lk 1:31.

[19] Mt 1:21; cf. 2:7.

[20] Dt 5:6.

[21] Cf. Ps 51:4, 12.

[22] Cf. Ps 79:9.

[23] Cf. Jn 3:18; Acts 2:21; 5:41; 3 Jn 7; Rom 10:6-13.

[24](#) Acts 4:12; cf. 9:14; Jas 2:7.

[25](#) Cf. Ex 25:22; Lev 16:2,15-16; Num 7:89; Sir 50:20; Heb 9:5,7.

[26](#) Rom 3:25; 2 Cor 5:19.

[27](#) Phil 2:9-10; cf. Jn 12:28.

[28](#) Cf. Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16; Mk 16:17; Jn 15:16.

II. Christ

436 The word “Christ” comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah, which means “anointed”. It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that “Christ” signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets. [\[29\]](#) This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively. [\[30\]](#) It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet. [\[31\]](#) Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet and king.

437 To the shepherds, the angel announced the birth of Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel: “To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.” [\[32\]](#) From the beginning he was “the one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world”, conceived as “holy” in Mary's virginal womb. [\[33\]](#) God called Joseph to “take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”, so that Jesus, “who is called Christ”, should be born of Joseph's spouse into the messianic lineage of David. [\[34\]](#)

438 Jesus' messianic consecration reveals his divine mission, “for the name 'Christ' implies 'he who anointed', 'he who was anointed' and 'the very anointing with which he was anointed'. the one who anointed is the Father, the one who was anointed is the Son, and he was anointed with the Spirit who is the anointing.” [\[35\]](#) His eternal messianic consecration was revealed during the time of his earthly life at the moment of his baptism by John, when “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power”, “that he might be revealed to Israel” [\[36\]](#) as its Messiah. His works and words will manifest him as “the Holy One of God”. [\[37\]](#)

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic “Son of David”, promised by God to Israel. [\[38\]](#) Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political. [\[39\]](#)

440 Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man. [\[40\]](#) He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man “who came down from heaven”, and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” [\[41\]](#) Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross. [\[42\]](#) Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: “Let

all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” [43]

[29](#) Cf. Ex 29:7; Lev 8:12; 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 16:1, 12-13; I Kings 1:39; 19:16.

[30](#) Cf. Ps 2:2; Acts 4:26-27.

[31](#) Cf. Is 11:2; 61:1; Zech 4:14; 6:13; Lk 4:16-21.

[32](#) Lk 2:11.

[33](#) Jn 10:36; cf. Lk 1:35.

[34](#) Mt 1:20; cf. 1:16; Rom 1:1; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16.

[35](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3,18,3: PG 7/1, 934.

[36](#) Acts 10:38; Jn 1:31.

[37](#) Mk 1:24; Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14.

[38](#) Cf Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15.

[39](#) Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21.

[40](#) Cf. Mt 16:16-23.

[41](#) Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Is 53:10-12.

[42](#) Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43.

[43](#) Acts 2:36.

III. The Only Son of God

441 In the Old Testament, “son of God” is a title given to the angels, the Chosen People, the children of Israel, and their kings. [44] It signifies an adoptive sonship that establishes a relationship of particular intimacy between God and his creature. When the promised Messiah-King is called “son of God”, it does not necessarily imply that he was more than human, according to the literal meaning of these texts. Those who called Jesus “son of God”, as the Messiah of Israel, perhaps meant nothing more than this. [45]

442 Such is not the case for Simon Peter when he confesses Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God”, for Jesus responds solemnly: “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” [46] Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, “When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...” [47] “and in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'” [48] From the beginning this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the centre of the apostolic faith, first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation. [49]

443 Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah's divine sonship because Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood. To his accusers' question before the Sanhedrin, “Are you the Son of God, then?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am.” [50] Well before this, Jesus referred to himself as “the Son” who knows the Father, as distinct from the “servants” God had earlier sent to his people; he is superior even to the angels. [51] He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying “our Father”, except to command them: “You, then,

pray like this: 'Our Father', and he emphasized this distinction, saying "my Father and your Father". [52]

444 The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his "beloved Son". [53] Jesus calls himself the "only Son of God", and by this title affirms his eternal pre-existence. [54] He asks for faith in "the name of the only Son of God". [55] In the centurion's exclamation before the crucified Christ, "Truly this man was the Son of God", [56] that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title "Son of God" its full meaning.

445 After his Resurrection, Jesus' divine sonship becomes manifest in the power of his glorified humanity. He was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead". [57] The apostles can confess: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." [58]

44 Cf. Dt 14:1; (LXX) 32:8; Job 1:6; Ex 4:22; Hos 2:1; 11:1; Jer 3:19; Sir 36:11; Wis 18:13; 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 82:6.

45 Cf. I Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7; Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47.

46 Mt 16:16-17.

47 Gal 1:15-16.

48 Acts 9:20.

49 Cf. I Th 1:10; Jn 20:31; Mt 16:18.

50 Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62.

51 Cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36.

52 Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17.

53 Cf. Mt 3:17; cf. 17:5.

54 Jn 3:16; cf. 10:36.

55 Jn 3:18.

56 Mk 15:39.

57 Rom 1:3; cf. Acts 13:33.

58 Jn 1:14.

IV. Lord

446 In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the ineffable Hebrew name YHWH, by which God revealed himself to Moses, [59] is rendered as Kyrios, "Lord". From then on, "Lord" becomes the more usual name by which to indicate the divinity of Israel's God. The New Testament uses this full sense of the title "Lord" both for the Father and - what is new - for Jesus, who is thereby recognized as God Himself. [60]

447 Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of Psalm 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles. [61] Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

448 Very often in the Gospels people address Jesus as “Lord”. This title testifies to the respect and trust of those who approach him for help and healing. [62] At the prompting of the Holy Spirit, “Lord” expresses the recognition of the divine mystery of Jesus. [63] In the encounter with the risen Jesus, this title becomes adoration: “My Lord and my God!” It thus takes on a connotation of love and affection that remains proper to the Christian tradition: “It is the Lord!” [64]

449 By attributing to Jesus the divine title “Lord”, the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honour and glory due to God the Father are due also to Jesus, because “he was in the form of God”, [65] and the Father manifested the sovereignty of Jesus by raising him from the dead and exalting him into his glory. [66]

450 From the beginning of Christian history, the assertion of Christ's lordship over the world and over history has implicitly recognized that man should not submit his personal freedom in an absolute manner to any earthly power, but only to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Caesar is not “the Lord”. [67] “The Church. . . believes that the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of man's history is to be found in its Lord and Master.” [68]

451 Christian prayer is characterized by the title “Lord”, whether in the invitation to prayer (“The Lord be with you”), its conclusion (“through Christ our Lord”) or the exclamation full of trust and hope: Maranatha (“Our Lord, come!”) or Maranatha (“Come, Lord!”) - “Amen Come Lord Jesus!” [69]

[59] Cf. Ex 3:14.

[60] Cf. I Cor 2:8.

[61] Cf. Mt 22:41-46; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Heb 1:13; Jn 13:13.

[62] Cf Mt 8:2; 14:30; 15:22; et al.

[63] Cf. Lk 1:43; 2:11.

[64] Jn 20:28, 21:7.

[65] Cf. Acts 2:34 - 36; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; Rev 5:13; Phil 2:6.

[66] Cf. Rom 10:9; I Cor 12:3; Phil 2:9-11.

[67] Cf. Rev 11:15; Mk 12:17; Acts 5:29.

[68] GS 10 # 3; Cf. 45 # 2.

[69] I Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20.

IN BRIEF

452 The name Jesus means “God saves”. the child born of the Virgin Mary is called Jesus, “for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21): “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

453 The title “Christ” means “Anointed One” (Messiah). Jesus is the Christ, for “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10:38). He was the one “who is to come” (Lk 7:19), the object of “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

454 The title “Son of God” signifies the unique and eternal relationship of Jesus Christ to God his Father: he is the only Son of the Father (cf Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); he is God himself (cf Jn 1:1). To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf Acts 8:37; 1 Jn 2:23).

455 The title “Lord” indicates divine sovereignty. To confess or invoke Jesus as Lord is to believe in his divinity. “No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit” (I Cor 12:3).

Article 3

“HE WAS CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WAS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”

Paragraph 1. THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN

I. WHY DID THE WORD BECOME FLESH?

456 With the Nicene Creed, we answer by confessing: “For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”

457 The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who “loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins”: “the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world”, and “he was revealed to take away sins”: [\[70\]](#)

Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. We had lost the possession of the good; it was necessary for it to be given back to us. Closed in the darkness, it was necessary to bring us the light; captives, we awaited a Saviour; prisoners, help; slaves, a liberator. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state? [\[71\]](#)

458 The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” [\[72\]](#) “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” [\[73\]](#)

459 The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.” “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.” [\[74\]](#) On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: “Listen to him!” [\[75\]](#) Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: “Love one another as I have loved you.” [\[76\]](#) This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example. [\[77\]](#)

460 The Word became flesh to make us “partakers of the divine nature”: [\[78\]](#) “For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into

communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God.” [79] “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.” [80] “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.” [81]

II. THE INCARNATION

461 Taking up St. John's expression, “The Word became flesh”, [82] The Church calls “Incarnation” the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. In a hymn cited by St. Paul, the Church sings the mystery of the Incarnation:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. and being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. [83]

462 The Letter to the Hebrews refers to the same mystery:

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I have come to do your will, O God.” [84]

463 Belief in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” [85] Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning whenever she sings “the mystery of our religion”: “He was manifested in the flesh.” [86]

III. TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

464 The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. During the first centuries, the Church had to defend and clarify this truth of faith against the heresies that falsified it.

465 The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son “come in the flesh”. [87] But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. the first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is “begotten, not made, of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father”, and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God “came to be from things that were not” and that he was “from another substance” than that of the Father. [88]

466 The Nestorian heresy regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's Son. Opposing this heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the third ecumenical council, at Ephesus

in 431, confessed “that the Word, uniting to himself in his person the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man.” [89] Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it and made it his own, from his conception. For this reason the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb: “Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh.” [90]

467 The Monophysites affirmed that the human nature had ceased to exist as such in Christ when the divine person of God's Son assumed it. Faced with this heresy, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon in 451, confessed: Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity; “like us in all things but sin”. He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God. [91]

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division or separation. the distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis. [92]

468 After the Council of Chalcedon, some made of Christ's human nature a kind of personal subject. Against them, the fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople in 553, confessed that “there is but one hypostasis [or person], which is our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Trinity.” [93] Thus everything in Christ's human nature is to be attributed to his divine person as its proper subject, not only his miracles but also his sufferings and even his death: “He who was crucified in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity.” [94]

469 The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother: “What he was, he remained and what he was not, he assumed”, sings the Roman Liturgy. [95] and the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom proclaims and sings: “O only-begotten Son and Word of God, immortal being, you who deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, you who without change became man and were crucified, O Christ our God, you who by your death have crushed death, you who are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!” [96]

IV. HOW IS THE SON OF GOD MAN?

470 Because “human nature was assumed, not absorbed”, [97] in the mysterious union of the Incarnation, the Church was led over the course of centuries to confess the full reality of Christ's

human soul, with its operations of intellect and will, and of his human body. In parallel fashion, she had to recall on each occasion that Christ's human nature belongs, as his own, to the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it. Everything that Christ is and does in this nature derives from “one of the Trinity”.

The Son of God therefore communicates to his humanity his own personal mode of existence in the Trinity. In his soul as in his body, Christ thus expresses humanly the divine ways of the Trinity: [\[98\]](#)

The Son of God. . . worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin. [\[99\]](#)

Christ's soul and his human knowledge

471 Apollinarius of Laodicea asserted that in Christ the divine Word had replaced the soul or spirit. Against this error the Church confessed that the eternal Son also assumed a rational, human soul. [\[100\]](#)

472 This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited: it was exercised in the historical conditions of his existence in space and time. This is why the Son of God could, when he became man, “increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man”, [\[101\]](#) and would even have to inquire for himself about what one in the human condition can learn only from experience. [\[102\]](#) This corresponded to the reality of his voluntary emptying of himself, taking “the form of a slave”. [\[103\]](#)

473 But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. [\[104\]](#) “The human nature of God's Son, not by itself but by its union with the Word, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God.” [\[105\]](#) Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father. [\[106\]](#) The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts. [\[107\]](#)

474 By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. [\[108\]](#) What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal. [\[109\]](#)

Christ's human will

475 Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for

our salvation. [110] Christ's human will “does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will.” [111]

Christ's true body

476 Since the Word became flesh in assuming a true humanity, Christ's body was finite. [112] Therefore the human face of Jesus can be portrayed; at the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea II in 787) the Church recognized its representation in holy images to be legitimate. [113]

477 At the same time the Church has always acknowledged that in the body of Jesus “we see our God made visible and so are caught up in love of the God we cannot see.” [114] The individual characteristics of Christ's body express the divine person of God's Son. He has made the features of his human body his own, to the point that they can be venerated when portrayed in a holy image, for the believer “who venerates the icon is venerating in it the person of the one depicted”. [115]

The heart of the Incarnate Word

478 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: “The Son of God. . . loved me and gave himself for me.” [116] He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, [117] “is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that. . . love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings” without exception. [118]

IN BRIEF

479 At the time appointed by God, the only Son of the Father, the eternal Word, that is, the Word and substantial Image of the Father, became incarnate; without losing his divine nature he has assumed human nature.

480 Jesus Christ is true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person; for this reason he is the one and only mediator between God and men.

481 Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son.

482 Christ, being true God and true man, has a human intellect and will, perfectly attuned and subject to his divine intellect and divine will, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

483 The Incarnation is therefore the mystery of the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in the one person of the Word.

- [70](#) I Jn 4:10; 4:14; 3:5.
- [71](#) St. Gregory of Nyssa, Orat. catech 15: PG 45, 48B.
- [72](#) I Jn 4:9.
- [73](#) Jn 3:16.
- [74](#) Mt 11:29; Jn 14:6.
- [75](#) Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5.
- [76](#) Jn 15:12.
- [77](#) Cf. Mk 8:34.
- [78](#) 2 Pt 1:4.
- [79](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939.
- [80](#) St. Athanasius, De inc. 54, 3: PG 25, 192B.
- [81](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusc. 57, 1-4.
- [82](#) Jn 1:14.
- [83](#) Phil 2:5-8; cf. LH, Saturday, Canticle at Evening Prayer.
- [84](#)] Heb 10:5-7, citing Ps 40:6-8 (7-9 LXX).
- [85](#) I Jn 4:2.
- [86](#) 1 Tim 3:16.
- [87](#) Cf. I Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7.
- [88](#) Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126.
- [89](#) Council of Ephesus (431): DS 250.
- [90](#) Council of Ephesus: DS 251.
- [91](#) Council of Chalcedon (451): DS 301; cf. Heb 4:15.
- [92](#) Council of Chalcedon: DS 302.
- [93](#) Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 424.
- [94](#) Council of Constantinople II (553): DS 432; cf. DS 424; Council of Ephesus, DS 255.
- [95](#) LH, 1 January, Antiphon for Morning Prayer; cf. St. Leo the Great, Sermo in nat. Dom. 1, 2; PL 54, 191-192.
- [96](#) Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Troparion O monogenes.
- [97](#) GS 22 # 2.
- [98](#) Cf. Jn 14:9-10.
- [99](#) GS 22 # 2.
- [100](#) Cf. Damasus 1: DS 149.
- [101](#) Lk 2:52.
- [102](#) Cf. Mk 6 38; 8 27; Jn 11:34; etc.
- [103](#) Phil 2:7.
- [104](#) Cf. St. Gregory the Great, "Sicut aqua" ad Eulogium, Epist. Lib. 10, 39 PL 77, 1097 Aff.; DS 475.
- [105](#) St. Maximus the Confessor, Qu. et dub. 66 PG 90, 840A.
- [106](#) Cf. Mk 14:36; Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 8:55; etc.
- [107](#) Cf. Mk 2:8; Jn 2 25; 6:61; etc.
- [108](#) Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30.
- [109](#) Cf. Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7.
- [110](#) Cf. Council of Constantinople III (681): DS 556-559.
- [111](#) Council of Constantinople III: DS 556.
- [112](#) Cf. Council of the Lateran (649): DS 504.
- [113](#) Cf. Cal 3:1; cf. Council of Nicaea II (787): DS 600-603.

[114](#) Roman Missal, Preface of Christmas I.

[115](#) Council of Nicaea II: DS 601.

[116](#) Cal 2:20.

[117](#) Cf. Jn 19:34.

[118](#) Pius XII, Enc. Haurietis aquas (1956): DS 3924; cf. DS 3812.

Paragraph 2. “CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”

I. CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. . .

484 The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates “the fullness of time”, [\[119\]](#) The time of the fulfilment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the “whole fullness of deity” would dwell “bodily”. [\[120\]](#) The divine response to her question, “How can this be, since I know not man?”, was given by the power of the Spirit: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you.” [\[121\]](#)

485 The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son. [\[122\]](#) The Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the giver of Life”, is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own.

486 The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is “Christ”, that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples. [\[123\]](#) Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” [\[124\]](#)

II.... BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

487 What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.

Mary's predestination

488 “God sent forth his Son”, but to prepare a body for him, [\[125\]](#) he wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, “a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary”: [\[126\]](#)

The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life. [\[127\]](#)

489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living. [128] By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age. [129] Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women. [130] Mary “stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established.” [131]

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary “was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.” [132] The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as “full of grace”. [133] In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, [134] was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin. [135]

492 The “splendour of an entirely unique holiness” by which Mary is “enriched from the first instant of her conception” comes wholly from Christ: she is “redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son”. [136] The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” and chose her “in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love”. [137]

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God “the All-Holy” (Panagia), and celebrate her as “free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature”. [138] By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long. “Let it be done to me according to your word. . .”

494 At the announcement that she would give birth to “the Son of the Most High” without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that “with God nothing will be impossible”: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word.” [139] Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace: [140]

As St. Irenaeus says, “Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” [141] Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert. . . : “The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith.” [142] Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary “the Mother of the living” and frequently claim: “Death through Eve, life through Mary.” [143]

Mary's divine motherhood

495 Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus”, Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord”. [144] In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God” (Theotokos). [145]

Mary's virginity

496 From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived “by the Holy Spirit without human seed”. [146] The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says: You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin,. . . he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate. . . he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen. [147]

497 The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility: [148] “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”, said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée. [149] The Church sees here the fulfilment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.” [150]

498 People are sometimes troubled by the silence of St. Mark's Gospel and the New Testament Epistles about Jesus' virginal conception. Some might wonder if we were merely dealing with legends or theological constructs not claiming to be history. To this we must respond: Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus met with the lively opposition, mockery or incomprehension of non-believers, Jews and pagans alike; [151] so it could hardly have been motivated by pagan mythology or by some adaptation to the ideas of the age. The meaning of this event is accessible only to faith, which understands in it the “connection of these mysteries with one another” [152] in the totality of Christ's mysteries, from his Incarnation to his Passover. St. Ignatius of Antioch already bears witness to this connection: “Mary's virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord's death escaped the notice of the prince of this world: these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God's silence.” [153]

Mary - “ever-virgin”

499 The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. [154] In fact, Christ's birth “did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it.” [155] and so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as Aeiparthenos, the “Ever-virgin”. [156]

500 Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. [157] The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus”, are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary”. [158] They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression. [159]

501 Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: “The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love.” [160]

Mary's virginal motherhood in God's plan

502 The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in his saving plan wanted his Son to be born of a virgin. These reasons touch both on the person of Christ and his redemptive mission, and on the welcome Mary gave that mission on behalf of all men.

503 Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. “He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures.” [161]

504 Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: “The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.” [162] From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God “gives him the Spirit without measure.” [163] From “his fullness” as the head of redeemed humanity “we have all received, grace upon grace.” [164]

505 By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in the new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith. “How can this be?” [165] Participation in the divine life arises “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”. [166] The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. the spousal character of the human vocation in relation to God [167] is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood.

506 Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith “unadulterated by any doubt”, and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will. [168] It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Saviour: “Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ.” [169]

507 At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: “the Church indeed. . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse.” [[170](#)]

IN BRIEF

508 From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. “Full of grace”, Mary is “the most excellent fruit of redemption” (SC 103): from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

509 Mary is truly “Mother of God” since she is the mother of the eternal Son of God made man, who is God himself.

510 Mary “remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin” (St. Augustine, Sermon 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is “the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38).

511 The Virgin Mary “co-operated through free faith and obedience in human salvation” (LG 56). She uttered her yes “in the name of all human nature” (St. Thomas Aquinas, S Th III, 30, 1). By her obedience she became the new Eve, mother of the living.

[119](#) Gal 4:4.

[120](#) Col 2:9.

[121](#) Lk 1:34-35 (Greek).

[122](#) Cf. Jn 16:14-15.

[123](#) Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:1-12; Lk 1:35; 2:8-20; Jn 1:3 1-34; 2:11.

[124](#) Acts 10:38.

[125](#) Gal 4:4; Heb 10:5.

[126](#) Lk 1:26-27.

[127](#) LG 56; cf. LG 61.

[128](#) Cf. Gen 3:15, 20.

[129](#) Cf. Gen 18:10-14; 21:1-2.

[130](#) Cf. I Cor 1:17; I Sam 1.

[131](#) LG 55.

[132](#) LG 56.

[133](#) Lk 1:28.

[134](#) Lk 1:28.

[135](#) Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854): DS 2803.

[136](#) LG 53, 56.

[137](#) Cf. Eph 1:3-4.

[138](#) LG 56.

[139](#) Lk 1:28-38; cf. Rom 1:5.

- [140](#) Cf. LG 56.
- [141](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.
- [142](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A.
- [143](#) LC 56; St. Epiphanius, Panarion 2, 78, 18: PG 42, 728CD-729AB; St. Jerome, Ep. 22, 21: PL 22, 408.
- [144](#) Lk 1:43; Jn 2:1; 19:25; cf. Mt 13:55; et al.
- [145](#) Council of Ephesus (431): DS 251.
- [146](#) Council of the Lateran (649): DS 503; cf. DS 10-64.
- [147](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Smyrn 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, ed. J. B. Lightfoot (London: Macmillan, 1889), 11/2, 289-293; SCh 10, 154-156; cf. Rom 1:3; Jn 1:13.
- [148](#) Mt 1 18-25; Lk 1:26-38.
- [149](#) Mt 1:20.
- [150](#) Is 7:14 (LXX), quoted in Mt 1:23 (Greek).
- [151](#) Cf. St. Justin, Dial. 99, 7: PG 6, 708-709; Origen, Contra Celsum 1, 32, 69: PG 11, 720-721; et al.
- [152](#) Dei Filius 4: DS 3016.
- [153](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Eph. 19, 1: AF 11/2 76-80: cf. I Cor 2:8.
- [154](#) Cf. DS 291; 294; 427; 442; 503; 571; 1880.
- [155](#) LG 57.
- [156](#) Cf. LG 52.
- [157](#) Cf. Mk 3:31-35; 6:3; I Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19.
- [158](#) Mt 13:55; 28:1; cf. Mt 27:56.
- [159](#) Cf. Gen 13:8; 14:16; 29:15; etc.
- [160](#) LG 63; cf. Jn 19:26-27; Rom 8:29; Rev 12:17.
- [161](#) Council of Friuli (796): DS 619; cf. Lk 2:48-49.
- [162](#) I Cor 15:45, 47.
- [163](#) Jn 3:34.
- [164](#) Jn 1:16; cf. Col 1:18.
- [165](#) Lk 1:34; cf. Jn 3:9[ETML:C/].
- [166](#) Jn 1:13.
- [167](#) Cf. 2 Cor 11:2.
- [168](#) LG 63; cf. I Cor 7:34-35.
- [169](#) St. Augustine, De virg. 3: PL 40, 398.
- [170](#) LG 64; cf. 63.

Paragraph 3. THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST'S LIFE

512 Concerning Christ's life the Creed speaks only about the mysteries of the Incarnation (conception and birth) and Paschal mystery (passion, crucifixion, death, burial, descent into hell, resurrection and ascension). It says nothing explicitly about the mysteries of Jesus' hidden or public life, but the articles of faith concerning his Incarnation and Passover do shed light on the whole of his earthly life. "All that Jesus did and taught, from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven", [[171](#)] is to be seen in the light of the mysteries of Christmas and Easter.

513 According to circumstances catechesis will make use of all the richness of the mysteries of Jesus. Here it is enough merely to indicate some elements common to all the mysteries of Christ's life (I), in order then to sketch the principal mysteries of Jesus' hidden (II) and public (III) life.

I. CHRIST'S WHOLE LIFE IS MYSTERY

514 Many things about Jesus of interest to human curiosity do not figure in the Gospels. Almost nothing is said about his hidden life at Nazareth, and even a great part of his public life is not recounted. [172] What is written in the Gospels was set down there “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” [173]

515 The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith [174] and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus' life was a sign of his mystery. [175] His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that “in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” [176] His humanity appeared as “sacrament”, that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission

Characteristics common to Jesus' mysteries

516 Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is Revelation of the Father. Jesus can say: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father”, and the Father can say: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” [177] Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest “God's love. . . among us”. [178]

517 Christ's whole life is a mystery of redemption. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross, [179] but this mystery is at work throughout Christ's entire life: -already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty; [180] - in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience; [181] - in his word which purifies its hearers; [182]- in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”; [183] - and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us. [184]

518 Christ's whole life is a mystery of recapitulation. All Jesus did, said and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation:

When Christ became incarnate and was made man, he recapitulated in himself the long history of mankind and procured for us a “short cut” to salvation, so that what we had lost in Adam, that is, being in the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus. [185] For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men. [186]

Our communion in the mysteries of Jesus

519 All Christ's riches “are for every individual and are everybody's property.” [187] Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation “for us men and for our salvation” to his death “for our sins” and Resurrection “for our justification”. [188] He is still “our advocate with the Father”, who “always lives to make intercession” for us. [189] He remains ever “in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us.” [190]

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. He is “the perfect man”, [191] who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way. [192]

521 Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. “By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.” [193] We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model:

We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus' life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. . . For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us. [194]

II. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' INFANCY AND HIDDEN LIFE

The preparations

522 The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the “First Covenant”. [195] He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

523 St. John the Baptist is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way. [196] “Prophet of the Most High”, John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last. [197] He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being “the friend of the bridegroom”, whom he points out as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. [198] Going before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah”, John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom. [199]

524 When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. [200] By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” [201]

The Christmas mystery

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. [202] Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest. [203] The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal

and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.

The angels and shepherds praise him

and the magi advance with the star,

For you are born for us,

Little Child, God eternal! [204]

526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. [205] For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become “children of God” we must be “born from above” or “born of God”. [206] Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. [207] Christmas is the mystery of this “marvellous exchange”:

O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity. [208]

The mysteries of Jesus' infancy

527 Jesus' circumcision, on the eighth day after his birth, [209] is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law [210] and his deputation to Israel's worship, in which he will participate throughout his life. This sign prefigures that “circumcision of Christ” which is Baptism. [211]

528 The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Saviour of the world. the great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. [212] In the magi, representatives of the neighbouring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. the magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations. [213] Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Saviour of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament. [214] The Epiphany shows that “the full number of the nations” now takes its “place in the family of the patriarchs”, and acquires *Israelitica dignitas* [215] (is made “worthy of the heritage of Israel”).

529 The presentation of Jesus in the temple shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord. [216] With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its encounter with the Saviour - the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the “light to the nations” and the “glory of Israel”, but also “a sign that is spoken against”. the sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had “prepared in the presence of all peoples”.

530 The flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents [217] make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.” [218] Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him. [219] Jesus' departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people. [220]

The mysteries of Jesus' hidden life

531 During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labour. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God, [221] a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was “obedient” to his parents and that he “increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.” [222]

532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfils the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. the everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: “Not my will. . .” [223] The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed. [224]

533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus - the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for silence, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us. . . A lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character... A lesson of work. Nazareth, home of the “Carpenter's Son”, in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work. . . To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern their brother who is God. [225]

534 The finding of Jesus in the temple is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus. [226] Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?” [227] Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary “kept all these things in her heart” during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life.

III. THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS' PUBLIC LIFE

The baptism of Jesus

535 Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan. [228] John preaches “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”. [229] A crowd of sinners [230] - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes - come to be baptized by him. “Then Jesus appears.” the Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, “This is my beloved Son.” [231] This is the manifestation (“Epiphany”) of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

536 The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. [232] Already he is anticipating the “baptism” of his bloody death. [233] Already he is coming to “fulfil all righteousness”, that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. [234] The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. [235] The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to “rest on him”. [236] Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism “the heavens were opened” [237] - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

537 Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. the Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and “walk in newness of life”: [238]

Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him. [239]

Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father's voice, we become sons of God. [240]

Jesus' temptations

538 The Gospels speak of a time of solitude for Jesus in the desert immediately after his baptism by John. Driven by the Spirit into the desert, Jesus remains there for forty days without eating; he lives among wild beasts, and angels minister to him. [241] At the end of this time Satan tempts him three times, seeking to compromise his filial attitude toward God. Jesus rebuffs these attacks, which recapitulate the temptations of Adam in Paradise and of Israel in the desert, and the devil leaves him “until an opportune time”. [242]

539 The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given in to temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he "binds the strong man" to take back his plunder. [243] Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father.

540 Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. [244] This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning." [245] By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

"The kingdom of God is at hand"

541 "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel.'" [246] "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth." [247] Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life". [248] He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms". [249]

542 Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the "family of God". By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery - his death on the cross and his Resurrection - he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. "and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Into this union with Christ all men are called. [250]

The proclamation of the kingdom of God

543 Everyone is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations. [251] To enter it, one must first accept Jesus' word:

The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest. [252]

544 The kingdom belongs to the poor and lowly, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; [253] he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [254] To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. [255] Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. [256] Jesus identifies

himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. [257]

545 Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” [258] He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast “joy in heaven over one sinner who repents”. [259] The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life “for the forgiveness of sins”. [260]

546 Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of parables, a characteristic feature of his teaching. [261] Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. [262] Words are not enough, deeds are required. [263] The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? [264] What use has he made of the talents he has received? [265] Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to “know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven”. [266] For those who stay “outside”, everything remains enigmatic. [267]

The signs of the kingdom of God

547 Jesus accompanies his words with many “mighty works and wonders and signs”, which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah. [268]

548 The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. [269] To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. [270] So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. [271] But his miracles can also be occasions for “offence”; [272] they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons. [273]

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, [274] Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, [275] but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage. [276]

550 The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” [277] Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over “the ruler of this world”. [278] The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: “God reigned from the wood.” [279]

“The keys of the kingdom”

551 From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission. [280] He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and 'sent

them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.” [281] They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [282]

552 Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve; [283] Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Our Lord then declared to him: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” [284] Christ, the “living Stone”, [285] thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it. [286]

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” [287] The “power of the keys” designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: “Feed my sheep.” [288] The power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles [289] and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

A foretaste of the kingdom: the Transfiguration

554 From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master “began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” [290] Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he. [291] In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus' Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, [292] before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James and John. Jesus' face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking “of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem”. [293] A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” [294]

555 For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter's confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to “enter into his glory”. [295] Moses and Elijah had seen God's glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah's sufferings. [296] Christ's Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God's servant; [297] The cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. “The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud.” [298]

You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would

understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendour of the Father. [299]

556 On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration. Jesus' baptism proclaimed "the mystery of the first regeneration", namely, our Baptism; the Transfiguration "is the sacrament of the second regeneration": our own Resurrection. [300] From now on we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. the Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body." [301] But it also recalls that "it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God": [302]

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: "Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?" [303]

Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem

557 "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem." [304] By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem." [305]

558 Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" [306] When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart's desire: "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes." [307]

Jesus' messianic entrance into Jerusalem

559 How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David". [308] Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (Hosanna means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass". [309] Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth. [310] and so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds. [311] Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord", [312] is taken up by the Church in the Sanctus of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover.

560 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King-Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church's liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.

IN BRIEF

561 “The whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences, his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfilment of Revelation” John Paul II, CT 9).

562 Christ's disciples are to conform themselves to him until he is formed in them (cf Gal 4:19). “For this reason we, who have been made like to him, who have died with him and risen with him, are taken up into the mysteries of his life, until we reign together with him” (LG 7 # 4).

563 No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child.

564 By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work.

565 From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the “Servant”, wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by the “baptism” of his Passion.

566 The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.

567 The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. “This kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ” (LG 5). the Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter.

568 Christ's Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles' faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent on to the “high mountain” prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27; cf.: St. Leo the Great, Sermo 51, 3: PL 54, 310C).

569 Jesus went up to Jerusalem voluntarily, knowing well that there he would die a violent death because of the opposition of sinners (cf Heb 12:3).

570 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem manifests the coming of the kingdom that the Messiah-King, welcomed into his city by children and the humble of heart, is going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection.

[171](#)

[172](#) Cf. Jn 20:30.

[173](#) Jn 20:31.
[174](#) Cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24.
[175](#) Cf Lk 2:7; Mt 27: 48; Jn 20:7.
[176](#) Col 2:9.
[177](#) Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7, “my beloved Son”.
[178](#) Jn 4:9[ETML:C/].
[179](#) Cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 2 Pt 1:18-19.
[180](#) Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.
[181](#) Cf. Lk 2:51.
[182](#) Cf. Jn 15:3.
[183](#) Mt 8:17; cf. Is 53:4.
[184](#) Cf. Rom 4:25.
[185](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 18, 1: PG 7/1, 932.
[186](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 18, 7: PG 7/1, 937; cf. 2, 22, 4.
[187](#) John Paul II, RH II.
[188](#) I Cor 15:3; Rom 4:25.
[189](#) I Jn 2:1 Heb 7:25.
[190](#) Heb 9:24.
[191](#) GS 38; cf. Rom 1 5:5; Phil 2:5.
[192](#) Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12.
[193](#) GS 22 # 2.
[194](#) St. John Eudes: LH, week 33, Friday, OR.
[195](#) Heb 9:15.
[196](#) Cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3[ETML:C/].
[197](#) Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13.
[198](#) Jn 1 29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29.
[199](#) Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29.
[200](#) Cf Rev 22:17.
[201](#) Jn 3:30.
[202](#) Cf. Lk 2:61.
[203](#) Cf. Lk 2:8-20.
[204](#) Kontakion of Romanos the Melodist.
[205](#) Cf. Mt 18:3-4.
[206](#) Jn 3 7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12.
[207](#) Cf. Gal 4:19.
[208](#) LH, 1 January, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer.
[209](#) Cf. Lk 2:21.
[210](#) Cf. Gal 4:4.
[211](#) Cf. Col 2:11-13.
[212](#) Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon at the Canticle of Mary.
[213](#) Cf Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16.
[214](#) Cf Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6.
[215](#) St. Leo the Great, Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third reading.
[216](#) Cf. Lk 2:22-39; EX 13:2, 12-13.
[217](#) Cf. Mt 2:13-18.

[218](#) Jn 1:11.
[219](#) Cf. Jn 15:20.
[220](#) Cf. Mt 2:15; Hos 11:1.
[221](#) Cf. Gal 4:4.
[222](#) Lk 2:51-52.
[223](#) Lk 22:42.
[224](#) Cf. Rom 5:19.
[225](#) Paul VI at Nazareth, 5 January 1964: LH, Feast of the Holy Family, OR.
[226](#) Cf. Lk 2:41-52.
[227](#) Lk 2:49 alt.
[228](#) Cf. Lk 3:23; Acts 1:22.
[229](#) Lk 3:3[ETML:C/].
[230](#) Cf. Lk 3:10-14; Mt 3:7; 21:32.
[231](#) Mt 3:13-17.
[232](#) Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12.
[233](#) Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50.
[234](#) Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39.
[235](#) Cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1.
[236](#) Jn 1:32-33; cf. Is 11:2.
[237](#) Mt 3:16.
[238](#) Rom 6:4.
[239](#) St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 40, 9: PG 36, 369.
[240](#) St. Hilary of Poitiers, In Matth. 2, 5: PL 9, 927.
[241](#) Cf. Mk 1:12-13.
[242](#) Lk 4:13.
[243](#) Cf. Ps 95:10; Mk 3:27
[244](#) Cf Mt 16:2 1-23.
[245](#) Heb 4:15.
[246](#) Mk 1:14-15.
[247](#) LG 3.
[248](#) LG 2.
[249](#) LG 5.
[250](#) Jn 12:32; cf. LG 3.
[251](#) Cf. Mt 8:11 10:5-7; 28:19.
[252](#) LC 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26-29; Lk 12:32.
[253](#) Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22.
[254](#) Mt 5:3[ETML:C/].
[255](#) Cf. Mt 11:25.
[256](#) Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6 1; 19:28; Lk 9:58.
[257](#) Cf. Mt 25:31-46.
[258](#) Mk 2:17; cf. 1 Tim 1:15.
[259](#) Lk 15:7; cf. 7:11-32.
[260](#) Mt 26:28.
[261](#) Cf. Mk 4:33-34.
[262](#) Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14.
[263](#) Cf. Mt 21:28-32.

[264](#) Cf. Mt 13:3-9.
[265](#) Cf. Mt 25:14-30.
[266](#) Mt 13:11.
[267](#) Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15.
[268](#) Acts 2:22; cf. Lk 7:18-23.
[269](#) cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 38.
[270](#) Cf. Mk 5:25-34; 10:52; etc.
[271](#) Cf. Jn 10:31-38.
[272](#) Mt 11:6.
[273](#) Cf. Jn 11:47-48; Mk 3:22.
[274](#) Cf. Jn 6:5-15; Lk 19:8; Mt 11:5.
[275](#) Cf. Lk 12 13-14; Jn 18:36.
[276](#) Cf. Jn 8:34-36.
[277](#) Mt 12:26, 28.
[278](#) Jn 12:31; cf. Lk 8:26-39.
[279](#) LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn Vexilla Regis: Regnavit a ligno Deus.
[280](#) Cf. Mk 3:13-19.
[281](#) Lk 9:2[ETML:C/].
[282](#) Lk 22:29-30.
[283](#) Cf Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; I Cor 15:5.
[284](#) Mt 16:18.
[285](#) I Pt 2:4.
[286](#) Cf. Lk 22:32.
[287](#) Mt 16:19.
[288](#) Jn 21:15-17; Cf. 10:11.
[289](#) Cf. Mt 18:18.
[290](#) Mt 16:21.
[291](#) Cf. Mt 16:22-23; 17:23; Lk 9:45.
[292](#) Cf. Mt 17:1-8 and parallels; 2 Pt 1:16-18.
[293](#) Lk 9:31.
[294](#) Lk 9:35.
[295](#) Lk 24:26.
[296](#) Cf. Lk 24:27.
[297](#) Cf. Is 42:1.
[298](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 45, 4, ad 2.
[299](#) Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Transfiguration, Kontakion.
[300](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 45, 4, ad 2.
[301](#) Phil 3:21.
[302](#) Acts 14:22.
[303](#) St. Augustine, Sermo 78, 6: PL 38, 492-493; cf. Lk 9:33.
[304](#) Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1.
[305](#) Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34.
[306](#) Mt 23:37.
[307](#) Lk 19:41-42.
[308](#) Lk 1:32; cf. Mt 21:1-11; Jn 6:15.
[309](#) Ps 24:7-10; Zech 9:9.

[310](#) Cf. Jn 18:37.

[311](#) Cf. Mt 21:15-16; cf. Ps 8:3; Lk 19:38; 2:14.

[312](#) Cf. Ps 118:26.

Article 4

“JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED AND WAS BURIED”

571 The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished “once for all” [\[313\]](#) by the redemptive death of his Son Jesus Christ.

572 The Church remains faithful to the interpretation of “all the Scriptures” that Jesus gave both before and after his Passover: “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” [\[314\]](#) Jesus' sufferings took their historical, concrete form from the fact that he was “rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes”, who handed “him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified”. [\[315\]](#)

573 Faith can therefore try to examine the circumstances of Jesus' death, faithfully handed on by the Gospels [\[316\]](#) and illuminated by other historical sources, the better to understand the meaning of the Redemption.

[313](#) Heb 9:26.

[314](#) Lk 24:26-27, 44-45.

[315](#) Mk 8:31; Mt 20:19.

[316](#) Cf. DV 19.

Paragraph 1. JESUS AND ISRAEL

574 From the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, certain Pharisees and partisans of Herod together with priests and scribes agreed together to destroy him. [\[317\]](#) Because of certain acts of his expelling demons, forgiving sins, healing on the sabbath day, his novel interpretation of the precepts of the Law regarding purity, and his familiarity with tax collectors and public sinners [\[318\]](#)--some ill-intentioned persons suspected Jesus of demonic possession. [\[319\]](#) He is accused of blasphemy and false prophecy, religious crimes which the Law punished with death by stoning. [\[320\]](#)

575 Many of Jesus' deeds and words constituted a “sign of contradiction”, [\[321\]](#) but more so for the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whom the Gospel according to John often calls simply “the Jews”, [\[322\]](#) than for the ordinary People of God. [\[323\]](#) To be sure, Christ's relations with the Pharisees were not exclusively polemical. Some Pharisees warn him of the danger he was

courting; [324] Jesus praises some of them, like the scribe of Mark 12:34, and dines several times at their homes. [325] Jesus endorses some of the teachings imparted by this religious elite of God's people: the resurrection of the dead, [326] certain forms of piety (almsgiving, fasting and prayer), [327] The custom of addressing God as Father, and the centrality of the commandment to love God and neighbour. [328]

576 In the eyes of many in Israel, Jesus seems to be acting against essential institutions of the Chosen People: - submission to the whole of the Law in its written commandments and, for the Pharisees, in the interpretation of oral tradition; - the centrality of the Temple at Jerusalem as the holy place where God's presence dwells in a special way; - faith in the one God whose glory no man can share.

I. JESUS AND THE LAW

577 At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus issued a solemn warning in which he presented God's law, given on Sinai during the first covenant, in light of the grace of the New Covenant:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law, until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [329]

578 Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfil the Law by keeping it in its all embracing detail - according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments". [330] He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly. [331] On their own admission the Jews were never able to observe the Law in its entirety without violating the least of its precepts. [332] This is why every year on the Day of Atonement the children of Israel ask God's forgiveness for their transgressions of the Law. the Law indeed makes up one inseparable whole, and St. James recalls, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." [333]

579 This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal. [334] This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry, [335] could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfilment of the Law by the only Righteous One in place of all sinners. [336]

580 The perfect fulfilment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son. [337] In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but "upon the heart" of the Servant who becomes "a covenant to the people", because he will "faithfully bring forth justice". [338] Jesus fulfils the Law to the point of taking upon himself "the curse of the Law" incurred by those who do not "abide by the things written in

the book of the Law, and do them”, for his death took place to redeem them “from the transgressions under the first covenant”. [339]

581 The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi. [340] He often argued within the framework of rabbinical interpretation of the Law. [341] Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people “as one who had authority, and not as their scribes”. [342] In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes. [343] Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old. . . But I say to you. . .” [344] With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human traditions of the Pharisees that were “making void the word of God”. [345]

582 Going even further, Jesus perfects the dietary law, so important in Jewish daily life, by revealing its pedagogical meaning through a divine interpretation: “Whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him. . . (Thus he declared all foods clean.). . . What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts. . .” [346] In presenting with divine authority the definitive interpretation of the Law, Jesus found himself confronted by certain teachers of the Law who did not accept his interpretation of the Law, guaranteed though it was by the divine signs that accompanied it. [347] This was the case especially with the sabbath laws, for he recalls, often with rabbinical arguments, that the sabbath rest is not violated by serving God and neighbour, [348] which his own healings did.

II. JESUS AND THE TEMPLE

583 Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth. [349] At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business. [350] He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover. [351] His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts. [352]

584 Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For him, the Temple was the dwelling of his Father, a house of prayer, and he was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce. [353] He drove merchants out of it because of jealous love for his Father: “You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'” [354] After his Resurrection his apostles retained their reverence for the Temple. [355]

585 On the threshold of his Passion Jesus announced the coming destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain “one stone upon another”. [356] By doing so, he announced a sign of the last days, which were to begin with his own Passover. [357] But this prophecy would be distorted in its telling by false witnesses during his interrogation at the high priest's house, and would be thrown back at him as an insult when he was nailed to the cross. [358]

586 Far from having been hostile to the Temple, where he gave the essential part of his teaching, Jesus was willing to pay the Temple-tax, associating with him Peter, whom he had just made the foundation of his future Church. [359] He even identified himself with the Temple by presenting himself as God's definitive dwelling-place among men. [360] Therefore his being put to bodily death [361] presaged the destruction of the Temple, which would manifest the dawning of a new age in the history of salvation: "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." [362]

III. JESUS AND ISRAEL'S FAITH IN THE ONE GOD AND SAVIOUR

587 If the Law and the Jerusalem Temple could be occasions of opposition to Jesus by Israel's religious authorities, his role in the redemption of sins, the divine work par excellence, was the true stumbling-block for them. [363]

588 Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves. [364] Against those among them "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others", Jesus affirmed: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [365] He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves. [366]

589 Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them. [367] He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet. [368] But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [369] By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name. [370]

590 Only the divine identity of Jesus' person can justify so absolute a claim as "He who is not with me is against me"; and his saying that there was in him "something greater than Jonah, . . . greater than Solomon", something "greater than the Temple"; his reminder that David had called the Messiah his Lord, [371] and his affirmations, "Before Abraham was, I AM", and even "I and the Father are one." [372]

591 Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished. [373] But such an act of faith must go through a mysterious death to self, for a new "birth from above" under the influence of divine grace. [374] Such a demand for conversion in the face of so surprising a fulfilment of the promises [375] allows one to understand the Sanhedrin's tragic misunderstanding of Jesus: they judged that he deserved the death sentence as a blasphemer. [376] The members of the Sanhedrin were thus acting at the same time out of "ignorance" and the "hardness" of their "unbelief". [377]

IN BRIEF

592 Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf Mt 5:17-19) with such perfection (cf Jn 8:46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf Mt 5:33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf Heb 9:15).

593 Jesus venerated the Temple by going up to it for the Jewish feasts of pilgrimage, and with a jealous love he loved this dwelling of God among men. the Temple prefigures his own mystery. When he announces its destruction, it is as a manifestation of his own execution and of the entry into a new age in the history of salvation, when his Body would be the definitive Temple.

594 Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Saviour God himself (cf Jn 5:16-18). Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man (cf Jn 1:14), saw in him only a man who made himself God (Jn 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer.

[317](#) Cf. Mk 3:6; 14:1.

[318](#) Cf. Mt 12:24; Mk 2:7, 14-17; 3:1-6; 7:14-23.

[319](#) Cf. Mk 3:22; Jn 8:48; 10:20.

[320](#) Cf. Mk 2:7; Jn 5:18; 7:12, 52; 8:59; 10:31, 33.

[321](#) Lk 2:34.

[322](#) Cf. Jn 1:19; 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19.

[323](#) Jn 7:48-49.

[324](#) Cf Lk 13:31.

[325](#) Cf. Lk 7:36; 14:1.

[326](#) Cf. Mt 22:23-34; Lk 20:39.

[327](#) Cf. Mt 6:18.

[328](#) Cf. Mk 12:28-34.

[329](#) Mt 5:17-19.

[330](#) Mt 5:19.

[331](#) Cf. Jn 8:46.

[332](#) Cf. Jn 7:19; Acts 13:38-41; 15:10.

[333](#) Jas 2:10; cf. Gal 3:10; 5:3.

[334](#) Cf. Rom 10:2.

[335](#) Cf. Mt 15:31; Lk 11:39-54.

[336](#) Cf Is 53:11; Heb 9:15.

[337](#) Cf. Gal 4:4.

[338](#) Jer 31:33; Is 42:3, 6.

[339](#) Gal 3:13; 3:10; Heb 9:15.

[340](#) Cf Jn 11:28; 3:2; Mt 22:23-24, 34-36.

[341](#) Cf. Mt 12:5; 9:12; Mk 2:23-27; Lk 6:6-g; Jn 7:22-23.

[342](#) Mt 7:28-29.

[343](#) Cf. Mt 5:1[ETML:C/].

[344](#) Mt 5:33-34.

[345](#) Mk 7:13; cf. 3:8.

[346](#) Mk 7:18-21; cf. Gal 3:24.

[347](#) Cf. Jn 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 12:37.

[348](#) Cf. Num 28 9; Mt 12:5; Mk 2:25-27; Lk 13:15-16; 14:3-4; Jn 7:22-24.

[349](#) Lk 2:22-39.
[350](#) Cf. Lk 2 46-49.
[351](#) Cf. Lk 2 41.
[352](#) Cf. Jn 2 13-14; 5:1, 14; 7:1, 10, 14; 8 2; 10:22-23.
[353](#) Cf. Mt 21:13.
[354](#) Jn 2:16-17; cf. Ps 69:10.
[355](#) Cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20, 21; etc.
[356](#) Cf. Mt 24:1-2.
[357](#) Cf. Mt 24:3; Lk 13:35.
[358](#) Cf Mk 14:57-58; Mt 27 39-40.
[359](#) Cf. Mt 8:4; 16:18; 17:24-27; Lk 17:14; Jn 4:22; 18:20.
[360](#) Cf. Jn 2:21; Mt 12:6.
[361](#) Cf. Jn 2:18-22.
[362](#) Jn 4:21; cf. 4:23-24; Mt 27:5; Heb 9:11; Rev 21:22.
[363](#) Cf. Lk 2:34; 20:17-18; Ps 118:22.
[364](#) Cf. Lk 5:30; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1.
[365](#) Lk 18:9; 5:32; cf. Jn 7:49; 9:34.
[366](#) Cf. Jn 8:33-36; 9:40-41.
[367](#) Cf. Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6.
[368](#) Cf. Lk 15:1-2, 22-32.
[369](#) Mk 2:7[ETML:C/].
[370](#) Cf. Jn 5:18; 10:33; 17:6,26.
[371](#) Cf. Mt 12:6, 30, 36, 37, 41-42.
[372](#) Jn 8:58; 10:30.
[373](#) Jn 10:36-38.
[374](#) Cf. Jn 3:7; 6:44.
[375](#) Cf. Is 53:1.
[376](#) Cf. Mk 3:6; Mt 26:64-66.
[377](#) Cf. Lk 23 34; Acts 3: 17-18; Mk 3:5; Rom 11:25, 20.

Paragraph 2. JESUS DIED CRUCIFIED

I. THE TRIAL OF JESUS

Divisions among the Jewish authorities concerning Jesus

595 Among the religious authorities of Jerusalem, not only were the Pharisee Nicodemus and the prominent Joseph of Arimathea both secret disciples of Jesus, but there was also long-standing dissension about him, so much so that St. John says of these authorities on the very eve of Christ's Passion, "many... believed in him", though very imperfectly. [\[378\]](#) This is not surprising, if one recalls that on the day after Pentecost "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" and "some believers... belonged to the party of the Pharisees", to the point that St. James could tell St. Paul, "How many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; and they are all zealous for the Law." [\[379\]](#)

596 The religious authorities in Jerusalem were not unanimous about what stance to take towards Jesus. [380] The Pharisees threatened to excommunicate his followers. [381] To those who feared that “everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation”, the high priest Caiaphas replied by prophesying: “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” [382] The Sanhedrin, having declared Jesus deserving of death as a blasphemer but having lost the right to put anyone to death, hands him over to the Romans, accusing him of political revolt, a charge that puts him in the same category as Barabbas who had been accused of sedition. [383] The chief priests also threatened Pilate politically so that he would condemn Jesus to death. [384]

Jews are not collectively responsible for Jesus' death

597 The historical complexity of Jesus' trial is apparent in the Gospel accounts. the personal sin of the participants (Judas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate) is known to God alone. Hence we cannot lay responsibility for the trial on the Jews in Jerusalem as a whole, despite the outcry of a manipulated crowd and the global reproaches contained in the apostles' calls to conversion after Pentecost. [385] Jesus himself, in forgiving them on the cross, and Peter in following suit, both accept “the ignorance” of the Jews of Jerusalem and even of their leaders. [386] Still less can we extend responsibility to other Jews of different times and places, based merely on the crowd's cry: “His blood be on us and on our children!”, a formula for ratifying a judicial sentence. [387] As the Church declared at the Second Vatican Council: . . .

Neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his Passion. . . the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture. [388]

All sinners were the authors of Christ's Passion

598 In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that “sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured.” [389] Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself, [390] The Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone:

We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. and it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” We, however, profess to know him. and when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him. [391]

Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins. [392]

II. CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE DEATH IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

“Jesus handed over according to the definite plan of God”

599 Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: “This Jesus (was) delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.” [393] This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God. [394]

600 To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of “predestination”, he includes in it each person's free response to his grace: “In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.” [395] For the sake of accomplishing his plan of salvation, God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness. [396] “He died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures”

601 The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of “the righteous one, my Servant” as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. [397] Citing a confession of faith that he himself had “received”, St. Paul professes that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.” [398] In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfils Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. [399] Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. [400] After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles. [401]

“For our sake God made him to be sin”

602 Consequently, St. Peter can formulate the apostolic faith in the divine plan of salvation in this way: “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake.” [402] Man's sins, following on original sin, are punishable by death. [403] By sending his own Son in the form of a slave, in the form of a fallen humanity, on account of sin, God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” [404]

603 Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned. [405] But in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” [406] Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God “did not

spare his own Son but gave him up for us all”, so that we might be “reconciled to God by the death of his Son”. [407]

God takes the initiative of universal redeeming love

604 By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” [408] God “shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” [409]

605 At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God's love excludes no one: “So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” [410] He affirms that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many”; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us. [411] The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: “There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer.” [412]

III. CHRIST OFFERED HIMSELF TO HIS FATHER FOR OUR SINS

Christ's whole life is an offering to the Father

606 The Son of God, who came down “from heaven, not to do (his) own will, but the will of him who sent (him)”, [413] said on coming into the world, “Lo, I have come to do your will, O God.” “and by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” [414] From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.” [415] The sacrifice of Jesus “for the sins of the whole world” [416] expresses his loving communion with the Father. “The Father loves me, because I lay down my life”, said the Lord, “(for) I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.” [417]

607 The desire to embrace his Father's plan of redeeming love inspired Jesus' whole life, [418] for his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation. and so he asked, “and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.” [419] and again, “Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” [420] From the cross, just before “It is finished”, he said, “I thirst.” [421]

“The Lamb who takes away the sin of the world”

608 After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. [422] By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover. [423] Christ's whole life expresses his mission: “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” [424]

Jesus freely embraced the Father's redeeming love

609 By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus “loved them to the end”, for “greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” [425] In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men. [426] Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” [427] Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death. [428]

At the Last Supper Jesus anticipated the free offering of his life

610 Jesus gave the supreme expression of his free offering of himself at the meal shared with the twelve Apostles “on the night he was betrayed”. [429] On the eve of his Passion, while still free, Jesus transformed this Last Supper with the apostles into the memorial of his voluntary offering to the Father for the salvation of men: “This is my body which is given for you.” “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” [430]

611 The Eucharist that Christ institutes at that moment will be the memorial of his sacrifice. [431] Jesus includes the apostles in his own offering and bids them perpetuate it. [432] By doing so, the Lord institutes his apostles as priests of the New Covenant: “For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.” [433]

The agony at Gethsemani

612 The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani, [434] making himself “obedient unto death”. Jesus prays: “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. . .” [435] Thus he expresses the horror that death represented for his human nature. Like ours, his human nature is destined for eternal life; but unlike ours, it is perfectly exempt from sin, the cause of death. [436] Above all, his human nature has been assumed by the divine person of the “Author of life”, the “Living One”. [437] By accepting in his human will that the Father's will be done, he accepts his death as redemptive, for “he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.” [438]

Christ's death is the unique and definitive sacrifice

613 Christ's death is both the Paschal sacrifice that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”, [439] and the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the “blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”. [440]

614 This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices. [441] First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who

in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience. [442]

Jesus substitutes his obedience for our disobedience

615 “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.” [443] By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who “makes himself an offering for sin”, when “he bore the sin of many”, and who “shall make many to be accounted righteous”, for “he shall bear their iniquities”. [444] Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father. [445]

Jesus consummates his sacrifice on the cross

616 It is love “to the end” [446] that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. [447] Now “the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.” [448] No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.

617 The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as “the source of eternal salvation” [449] and teaches that “his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us.” [450] and the Church venerates his cross as she sings: “Hail, O Cross, our only hope.” [451]

Our participation in Christ's sacrifice

618 The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the “one mediator between God and men”. [452] But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, “the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” is offered to all men. [453] He calls his disciples to “take up [their] cross and follow (him)”, [454] for “Christ also suffered for (us), leaving (us) an example so that (we) should follow in his steps.” [455] In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. [456] This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering. [457] Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven. [458]

IN BRIEF

619 “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures” (I Cor 15:3).

620 Our salvation flows from God's initiative of love for us, because “he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (I Jn 4:10). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:19).

621 Jesus freely offered himself for our salvation. Beforehand, during the Last Supper, he both symbolized this offering and made it really present: “This is my body which is given for you” (Lk 22:19).

622 The redemption won by Christ consists in this, that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28), that is, he “loved [his own] to the end” (Jn 13:1), so that they might be “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from [their] fathers” (I Pt 1:18).

623 By his loving obedience to the Father, “unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfils the atoning mission (cf Is 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will “make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities” (Is 53:11; cf. Rom 5:19).

[378](#) Jn 12:42; cf. 7:50; 9:16-17; 10:19-21; 19:38-39.

[379](#) Acts 6:7; 15:5; 21:20.

[380](#) cf. Jn 9:16; 10:19.

[381](#) Cf Jn 9:22.

[382](#) Jn 11:48-50.

[383](#) Cf. Mt 26:66; Jn 18:31; Lk 23:2, 19.

[384](#) Cf. Jn 19:12, 15, 21.

[385](#) Cf. Mk 15:11; Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-14; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28; I Th 2:14-15.

[386](#) Cf. Lk 23:34; Acts 3:17.

[387](#) Mt 27:25; cf. Acts 5:28; 18:6.

[388](#) NA 4.

[389](#) Roman Catechism I, 5, 11; cf. Heb 12:3.

[390](#) Cf. Mt 25:45; Acts 9:4-5.

[391](#) Roman Catechism I, 5, 11; cf. Heb 6:6; 1 Cor 2:8.

[392](#) St. Francis of Assisi, Admonitio 5, 3.

[393](#) Acts 2:23.

[394](#) Cf. Acts 3:13.

[395](#) Acts 4:27-28; cf. Ps 2:1-2.

[396](#) Cf. Mt 26:54; Jn 18:36; 19:11; Acts 3:17-18.

[397](#) Is 53:11; cf. 53:12; Jn 8 34-36; Acts 3:14.

[398](#) 1 Cor 15:3; cf. also Acts 3:18; 7:52; 13:29; 26:22-23.

[399](#) Cf. Is 53:7-8 and Acts 8:32-35.

[400](#) Cf. Mt 20:28.

[401](#) Cf. Lk 24:25-27, 44-45.

[402](#) I Pt 1:18-20.

[403](#) Cf. Rom 5:12; I Cor 15:56.

[404](#) 2 Cor 5:21; cf. Phil 2:7; Rom 8:3.

[405](#) Cf. Jn 8:46.

[406](#) Mk 15:34; Ps 22:2; cf. Jn 8:29.

[407](#) Rom 8:32; 5:10.

[408](#) I John 4:10; 4:19.

[409](#) Rom 5:8.

[410](#) Mt 18:14.

[411](#) Mt 20:28; cf. Rom 5:18-19.
[412](#) Council of Quiercy (853): DS 624; cf. 2 Cor 5:15; I Jn 2:2[ETML:C/].
[413](#) Jn 6:38.
[414](#) Heb 10:5-10.
[415](#) Jn 4:34.
[416](#) 1 Jn 2:2[ETML:C/].
[417](#) Jn 10:17; 14:31.
[418](#) Cf Lk 12:50; 22:15; Mt 16:21-23.
[419](#) Jn 12:27.
[420](#) Jn 18:11.
[421](#) Jn 19:30; 19:28.
[422](#) Jn 1:29; cf. Lk 3:21; Mt 3:14-15; Jn 1:36.
[423](#) Is 53:7, 12; cf. Jer 11:19; Ex 12:3-14; Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7.
[424](#) Mk 10:45.
[425](#) Jn 13:1; 15:13.
[426](#) Cf. Heb 2:10, 17-18; 4:15; 5:7-9.
[427](#) Jn 10:18.
[428](#) Cf. Jn 18:4-6; Mt 26:53.
[429](#) Roman Missal, EP III; cf. Mt 26:20; 1 Cor 11:23.
[430](#) Lk 22:19; Mt 26:28; cf. 15.7Cor 5:7.
[431](#) 1 Cor 11:25.
[432](#) Cf. Lk 22:19.
[433](#) Jn 17:19; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1752; 1764.
[434](#) Cf. Mt 26:42; Lk 22:20.
[435](#) Phil 2:8; Mt 26:39; cf. Heb 5:7-8.
[436](#) Cf. Rom 5:12; Heb 4:15.
[437](#) Cf. Acts 3:15; Rev 1:17; Jn 1:4; 5:26.
[438](#) 2 Pt 2:24; cf. Mt 26:42.
[439](#) Jn 1:29; cf. 8:34-36; 1 Cor 5:7; 2 Pt 1:19.
[440](#) Mt 26:28; cf. Ex 24:8; Lev 16:15-16; 2 Cor 11:25.
[441](#) Cf. Heb 10:10.
[442](#) Cf. Jn 10:17-18; 15:13; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 4:10.
[443](#) Rom 5:19.
[444](#) Is 53:10-12.
[445](#) Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1529.
[446](#) Jn 13:1.
[447](#) Cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25.
[448](#) 2 Cor 5:14.
[449](#) Heb 5:9.
[450](#) Council of Trent: DS 1529.
[451](#) LH, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn Vexilla Regis.
[452](#) 1 Tim 2:5.
[453](#) GS 22 # 5; cf. # 2.
[454](#) Mt 16:24.
[455](#) I Pt 2:21.
[456](#) Cf Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24.

[457](#) Cf. Lk 2:35.

[458](#) St. Rose of Lima: cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* (Louvain, 1668).

Paragraph 3. JESUS CHRIST WAS BURIED

624 “By the grace of God” Jesus tasted death “for every one”. [\[459\]](#) In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only “die for our sins” [\[460\]](#) but should also “taste death”, experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. the state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb, [\[461\]](#) reveals God's great sabbath rest [\[462\]](#) after the fulfilment [\[463\]](#) of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe. [\[464\]](#)

Christ in the tomb in his body

625 Christ's stay in the tomb constitutes the real link between his passible state before Easter and his glorious and risen state today. the same person of the “Living One” can say, “I died, and behold I am alive for evermore”: [\[465\]](#)

God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life, by arresting in himself the decomposition of nature produced by death and so becoming the source of reunion for the separated parts. [\[466\]](#)

626 Since the “Author of life” who was killed [\[467\]](#) is the same “living one [who has] risen”, [\[468\]](#) The divine person of the Son of God necessarily continued to possess his human soul and body, separated from each other by death:

By the fact that at Chnst's death his soul was separated from his flesh, his one person is not itself divided into two persons; for the human body and soul of Christ have existed in the same way from the beginning of his earthly existence, in the divine person of the Word; and in death, although separated from each other, both remained with one and the same person of the Word. [\[469\]](#)

“You will not let your Holy One see corruption”

627 Christ's death was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union his body retained with the person of the Son, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for “divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption.” [\[470\]](#) Both of these statements can be said of Christ: “He was cut off out of the land of the living”, [\[471\]](#) and “My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption.” [\[472\]](#) Jesus' Resurrection “on the third day” was the proof of this, for bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death. [\[473\]](#)

“Buried with Christ. . .”

628 Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” [474]

IN BRIEF

629 To the benefit of every man, Jesus Christ tasted death (cf Heb 2:9). It is truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried.

630 During Christ's period in the tomb, his divine person continued to assume both his soul and his body, although they were separated from each other by death. For this reason the dead Christ's body “saw no corruption” (Acts 13:37).

[459](#) Heb 2:9.

[460](#) I Cor 15:3.

[461](#) Cf. Jn 19:42.

[462](#) Cf. Heb 4:7-9.

[463](#) Cf. Jn 19:30.

[464](#) Cf Col 1: 18-20.

[465](#) Rev 1:18.

[466](#) St. Gregory of Nyssa, Orat. catech. 16: PG 45, 52D.

[467](#) Acts 3:15.

[468](#) Lk 24:5-6.

[469](#) St. John Damascene, De fide orth. 3, 27: PG 94, 1097.

[470](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 51, 3.

[471](#) Is 53:8.

[472](#) Acts 2:26-27; cf. Ps 16:9-10.

[473](#) Cf. I Cor 15:4; Lk 24:46; Mt 12:40; Jon 2:1; Hos 6:2; cf. Jn 11:39.

[474](#) Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12; Eph 5:26.

Article 5

“HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN”

631 Jesus “descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens.” [475] The Apostles' Creed confesses in the same article Christ's descent into hell and his Resurrection from the dead on the third day, because in his Passover it was precisely out of the depths of death that he made life spring forth:

Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. [476]

[475](#) Eph 4:9-10.

[476](#) Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 18, Exsultet.

Paragraph 1. CHRIST DESCENDED INTO HELL

632 The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was “raised from the dead” presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection. [\[477\]](#) This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Saviour, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there. [\[478\]](#)

633 Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, “hell” - Sheol in Hebrew or Hades in Greek - because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. [\[479\]](#) Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the Redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into “Abraham's bosom”: [\[480\]](#) “It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Saviour in Abraham's bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell.” [\[481\]](#) Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him. [\[482\]](#)

634 “The gospel was preached even to the dead.” [\[483\]](#) The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfilment. This is the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.

635 Christ went down into the depths of death so that “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” [\[484\]](#) Jesus, “the Author of life”, by dying destroyed “him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.” [\[485\]](#) Henceforth the risen Christ holds “the keys of Death and Hades”, so that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” [\[486\]](#)

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. the earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. . . He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him - He who is both their God and the son of Eve. . . “I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. . . I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.” [\[487\]](#)

IN BRIEF

636 By the expression “He descended into hell”, the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil “who has the power of death” (Heb 2:14).

637 In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.

[477](#) Acts 3:15; Rom 8:11; I Cor 15:20; cf. Heb 13:20.

[478](#) Cf. I Pt 3:18-19.

[479](#) Cf. Phil 2:10; Acts 2:24; Rev 1:18; Eph 4:9; Pss 6:6; 88:11-13.

[480](#) Cf. Ps 89:49; I Sam 28:19; Ezek 32:17-32; Lk 16:22-26.

[481](#) Roman Catechism 1, 6, 3.

[482](#) Cf. Council of Rome (745): DS 587; Benedict XII, Cum dudum (1341): DS 1011; Clement VI, Super quibusdam (1351): DS 1077; Council of Toledo IV (625): DS 485; Mt 27:52-53.

[483](#) I Pt 4:6.

[484](#) Jn 5:25; cf. Mt 12:40; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9.

[485](#) Heb 2:14-15; cf. Acts 3:15.

[486](#) Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10.

[487](#) Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday: PG 43, 440A, 452C; LH, Holy Saturday, OR.

Paragraph 2. ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

638 “We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this day he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus.” [\[488\]](#) The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross:

Christ is risen from the dead!

Dying, he conquered death;

To the dead, he has given life. [\[489\]](#)

I. THE HISTORICAL AND TRANSCENDENT EVENT

639 The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. . .” [\[490\]](#) The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus. [\[491\]](#)

The empty tomb

640 “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” [492] The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ's body from the tomb could be explained otherwise. [493] Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter. [494] The disciple “whom Jesus loved” affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered “the linen cloths lying there”, “he saw and believed”. [495] This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb's condition that the absence of Jesus' body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus. [496]

The appearances of the Risen One

641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One. [497] Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the apostles themselves. [498] They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers, [499] and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” [500]

642 Everything that happened during those Paschal days involves each of the apostles - and Peter in particular - in the building of the new era begun on Easter morning. As witnesses of the Risen One, they remain the foundation stones of his Church. The faith of the first community of believers is based on the witness of concrete men known to the Christians and for the most part still living among them. Peter and the Twelve are the primary “witnesses to his Resurrection”, but they are not the only ones - Paul speaks clearly of more than five hundred persons to whom Jesus appeared on a single occasion and also of James and of all the apostles. [501]

643 Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold. [502] The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized (“looking sad” [503]) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an “idle tale”. [504] When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, “he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.” [505]

644 Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. “In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering.” [506] Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord's last appearance in Galilee “some doubted.” [507]

Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles' faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.

The condition of Christ's risen humanity

645 By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion. [508] Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm. [509] For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith. [510]

646 Christ's Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus' daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus' power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ's Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus' Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is "the man of heaven". [511]

The Resurrection as transcendent event

647 O truly blessed Night, sings the Exsultet of the Easter Vigil, which alone deserved to know the time and the hour when Christ rose from the realm of the dead! [512] But no one was an eyewitness to Christ's Resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was an historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb and by the reality of the apostles' encounters with the risen Christ, still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history. This is why the risen Christ does not reveal himself to the world, but to his disciples, "to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people." [513]

II. THE RESURRECTION - A WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

648 Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. the Father's power "raised up" Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son's humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as "Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead". [514] St. Paul insists on the manifestation of God's power [515]

through the working of the Spirit who gave life to Jesus' dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship.

649 As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise. [516] Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." [517] "We believe that Jesus died and rose again." [518]

650 The Fathers contemplate the Resurrection from the perspective of the divine person of Christ who remained united to his soul and body, even when these were separated from each other by death: "By the unity of the divine nature, which remains present in each of the two components of man, these are reunited. For as death is produced by the separation of the human components, so Resurrection is achieved by the union of the two." [519]

III. THE MEANING AND SAVING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

651 "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." [520] The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification if Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised.

652 Christ's Resurrection is the fulfilment of the promises both of the Old Testament and of Jesus himself during his earthly life. [521] The phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" [522] indicates that Christ's Resurrection fulfilled these predictions.

653 The truth of Jesus' divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he." [523] The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly "I AM", the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: "What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'" [524] Christ's Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God's Son, and is its fulfilment in accordance with God's eternal plan.

654 The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace. [526] It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: "Go and tell my brethren." [527] We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.

655 Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." [528] The risen

Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfilment. In Christ, Christians “have tasted. . . the powers of the age to come” [529] and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may “live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” [530]

IN BRIEF

656 Faith in the Resurrection has as its object an event which is historically attested to by the disciples, who really encountered the Risen One. At the same time, this event is mysteriously transcendent insofar as it is the entry of Christ's humanity into the glory of God.

657 The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.

658 Christ, “the first-born from the dead” (Col 1:18), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the justification of our souls (cf Rom 6:4), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf Rom 8:11).

[488](#) Acts 13:32-33.

[489](#) Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter.

[490](#) I Cor 15:3-4.

[491](#) Cf. Acts 9:3-18.

[492](#) Lk 24:5-6.

[493](#) Cf. Jn 20:13; Mt 28:11-15.

[494](#) Cf. Lk 24:3, 12, 22-23.

[495](#) Jn 20:2, 6, 8.

[496](#) Cf. Jn 11:44; 20:5-7.

[497](#) Mk 16:1; Lk 24:1; Jn 19:31, 42.

[498](#) Cf Lk 24:9-10; Mt 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18.

[499](#) Cf I Cor 15:5; Lk 22:31-32.

[500](#) Lk 24:34, 36.

[501](#) I Cor 15:4-8; cf. Acts 1:22.

[502](#) Cf. Lk 22:31-32.

[503](#) 1 Lk 24:17; cf. Jn 20:19.

[504](#) Lk 24:11; cf. Mk 16:11, 13.

[505](#) Mk 16:14.

[506](#) Lk 24:38-41.

[507](#) Cf Jn 20:24-27; Mt 28:17.

[508](#) Cf. Lk 24:30, 39-40, 41-43; Jn 20:20, 27; 21:9, 13-15.

[509](#) Cf. Mt 28:9, 16-17; Lk 24:15, 36; Jn 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4.

[510](#) Cf. Mk 16:12; Jn 20:14-16; 21:4, 7.

[511](#) Cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50.

[512](#) O vere beata nox, quae sola meruit scire tempus et horam, in qua Christus ab inferis resurrexit!

[513](#) Acts 13:31; cf. Jn 14:22.

[514](#) Rom I 3-4; cf. Acts 2:24.

[515](#) Cf. Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-22; Heb 7:16.

[516](#) Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34.

[517](#) Jn 10:17-18.

[518](#) I Th 4:14.

[519](#) St. Gregory of Nyssa, In Christi res. Orat. I: PG 46, 617B; cf. also DS 325; 359; 369.

[520](#) I Cor 15:14.

[521](#) Cf. Mt 28:6; Mk 16:7; Lk 24:6-7, 26-27, 44-48.

[522](#) Cf. I Cor 15:3-4; cf. the Nicene Creed.

[523](#) Jn 8:28.

[524](#) Acts 13:32-33; cf. Ps 2:7[ETML:C/].

[526](#) Cf. Eph 2:4-5; I Pt 1:3.

[527](#) Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17.

[528](#) I Cor 15:20-22.

[529](#) Heb 6:5.

[530](#) 2 Cor 5:15; cf. Col 3:1-3.

Article 6

“HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER”

659 “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.” [\[531\]](#) Christ's body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys. [\[532\]](#) But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity. [\[533\]](#) Jesus' final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand. [\[534\]](#) Only in a wholly exceptional and unique way would Jesus show himself to Paul “as to one untimely born”, in a last apparition that established him as an apostle. [\[535\]](#)

660 The veiled character of the glory of the Risen One during this time is intimated in his mysterious words to Mary Magdalene: “I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” [\[536\]](#) This indicates a difference in manifestation between the glory of the risen Christ and that of the Christ exalted to the Father's right hand, a transition marked by the historical and transcendent event of the Ascension.

661 This final stage stays closely linked to the first, that is, to his descent from heaven in the Incarnation. Only the one who “came from the Father” can return to the Father: Christ Jesus. [\[537\]](#) “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.” [\[538\]](#) Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the “Father's house”, to

God's life and happiness. [539] Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us. [540]

662 “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” [541] The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, “entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands. . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” [542] There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he “always lives to make intercession” for “those who draw near to God through him”. [543] As “high priest of the good things to come” he is the centre and the principal actor of the liturgy that honours the Father in heaven. [544]

663 Henceforth Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father: “By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honour of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified.” [545]

664 Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfilment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: “To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” [546] After this event the apostles became witnesses of the “kingdom [that] will have no end”. [547]

[531] Mk 16:19.

[532] Cf Lk 24:31; Jn 20:19, 26.

[533] Cf. Acts 1:3; 10:41; Mk 16:12; Lk 24:15; Jn 20:14-15; 21:4.

[534] Cf. Acts 1:9; 2:33; 7:56; Lk 9:34-35; 24:51; Ex 13:22; Mk 16:19; Ps 110:1.

[535] 1 Cor 15:8; cf. 9:1; Gal 1:16.

[536] Jn 20:17.

[537] Cf. Jn 16:28.

[538] Jn 3:13; cf. Eph 4:8-10.

[539] Jn 14:2.

[540] Missale Romanum, Preface of the Ascension: sed ut illuc confideremus, sua membra, nos subsequi quo ipse, caput nostrum principiumque, praecessit.

[541] Jn 12:32.

[542] Heb 9:24.

[543] Heb 7:25.

[544] Heb 9:11; cf. Rev 4:6-11.

[545] St. John Damascene, Defide orth. 4, 2: PG 94, 1104C.

[546] Dan 7:14.

[547] Nicene Creed.

IN BRIEF

665 Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf Acts 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf Col 3:3).

666 Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him for ever.

667 Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Article 7

“FROM THENCE HE WILL COME AGAIN TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD”

I. He Will Come Again in Glory

Christ already reigns through the Church. . .

668 “Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” [548] Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion”, for the Father “has put all things under his feet.” [549] Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are “set forth” and transcendently fulfilled. [550]

669 As Lord, Christ is also head of the Church, which is his Body. [551] Taken up to heaven and glorified after he had thus fully accomplished his mission, Christ dwells on earth in his Church. the redemption is the source of the authority that Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, exercises over the Church. “The kingdom of Christ (is) already present in mystery”, “on earth, the seed and the beginning of the kingdom”. [552]

670 Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfilment. We are already at “the last hour”. [553] “Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect.” [554] Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church. [555] . . . until all things are subjected to him

671 Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled “with power and great glory” by the King's return to earth. [556] This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover. [557] Until everything is subject to him, “until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which

justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God.” [558] That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him: [559] Maranatha! “Our Lord, come!” [560]

672 Before his Ascension Christ affirmed that the hour had not yet come for the glorious establishment of the messianic kingdom awaited by Israel [561] which, according to the prophets, was to bring all men the definitive order of justice, love and peace. [562] According to the Lord, the present time is the time of the Spirit and of witness, but also a time still marked by “distress” and the trial of evil which does not spare the Church [563] and ushers in the struggles of the last days. It is a time of waiting and watching. [564]

The glorious advent of Christ, the hope of Israel

673 Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, [565] even though “it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” [566]. This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are “delayed”. [567]

674 The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by “all Israel”, for “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” in their “unbelief” toward Jesus. [568] St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.” [569] St. Paul echoes him: “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” [570] The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles”, [571] will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”, in which “God may be all in all”. [572]

The Church's ultimate trial

675 Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. [573] The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth [574] will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. the supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. [575]

676 The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgement. the Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, [576] especially the “intrinsically perverse” political form of a secular messianism. [577]

677 The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection. [578] The kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven. [579] God's triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgement after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world. [580]

[548](#) Rom 14:9.

[549](#) Eph 1:20-22.

[550](#) Eph 1:10; cf. 4:10; 1 Cor 15:24, 27-28.

[551](#) Cf. Eph 1:22.

[552](#) LG 3; 5; cf. Eph 4:11-13.

[553](#) I Jn 2:18; cf. I Pt 4:7.

[554](#) LG 48 # 3; cf. I Cor 10:11.

[555](#) Cf. Mk 16:17-18, 20.

[556](#) Lk 21:27; cf. Mt 25:31.

[557](#) Cf. 2 Th 2:7.

[558](#) LG 48 # 3; cf. 2 Pt 3:13; Rom 8:19-22; I Cor 15:28.

[559](#) Cf. I Cor 11:26; 2 Pt 3:11-12.

[560](#) I Cor 16:22; Rev 22:17, 20.

[561](#) Cf. Acts 1:6-7.

[562](#) Cf. Is 11:1-9.

[563](#) Cf. Acts 1:8; I Cor 7:26; Eph 5:16; I Pt 4:17.

[564](#) Cf. Mt 25:1, 13; Mk 13:33-37; I I Jn 2:18; 4:3; I Tim 4:1.

[565](#) Cf. Rev 22:20.

[566](#) Acts 1:7; Cf. Mk 13:32.

[567](#) Cf. Mt 24:44; I Th 5:2; 2 Th 2:3-12.

[568](#) Rom I 1:20-26; cf. Mt 23:39.

[569](#) Acts 3:19-21.

[570](#) Rom 11:15.

[571](#) Rom 11:12, 25; cf. Lk 21:24.

[572](#) Eph 4:13; I Cor 15:28.

[573](#) Cf. Lk 18:8; Mt 24:12.

[574](#) Cf. Lk 21:12; Jn 15:19-20.

[575](#) Cf. 2 Th 2:4-12; I Th 5:2-3; 2 Jn 7; I Jn 2:1 8, 22.

[576](#) Cf. DS 3839.

[577](#) Pius XI, Divini Redemptoris, condemning the “false mysticism” of this “counterfeit of the redemption of the lowly”; cf. GS 20-21.

[578](#) Cf. Rev 19:1-9.

[579](#) Cf Rev 13:8; 20:7-10; 21:2-4.

[580](#) Cf. Rev 20:12 2 Pt 3:12-13.

II. To Judge the Living and the Dead

678 Following in the steps of the prophets and John the Baptist, Jesus announced the judgement of the Last Day in his preaching. [581] Then will the conduct of each one and the secrets of hearts be brought to light. [582] Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned. [583] Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love. [584] On the Last Day Jesus will say: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." [585]

679 Christ is Lord of eternal life. Full right to pass definitive judgement on the works and hearts of men belongs to him as redeemer of the world. He "acquired" this right by his cross. the Father has given "all judgement to the Son". [586] Yet the Son did not come to judge, but to save and to give the life he has in himself. [587] By rejecting grace in this life, one already judges oneself, receives according to one's works, and can even condemn oneself for all eternity by rejecting the Spirit of love. [588]

[581] Cf. Dan 7:10; Joel 3-4; Mal 3: 19; Mt 3:7-12.

[582] Cf. Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; I Cor 4:5.

[583] Cf. Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42.

[584] Cf. Mt 5:22; 7:1-5.

[585] Mt 25:40.

[586] Jn 5:22; cf. 5:27; Mt 25:31; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1.

[587] Cf. Jn 3:17; 5:26.

[588] Cf. Jn 3:18; 12:48; Mt 12:32; I Cor 3:12-15; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31.

IN BRIEF

680 Christ the Lord already reigns through the Church, but all the things of this world are not yet subjected to him. the triumph of Christ's kingdom will not come about without one last assault by the powers of evil.

681 On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history.

682 When he comes at the end of time to judge the living and the dead, the glorious Christ will reveal the secret disposition of hearts and will render to each man according to his works, and according to his acceptance or refusal of grace.

CHAPTER THREE

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

683 “No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.” [1] “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!’” [2] This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son.

Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them. and it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit. [3]

684 Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to “know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ.” [4] But the Spirit is the last of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, explains this progression in terms of the pedagogy of divine “condescension”:

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. the New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly.... By advancing and progressing “from glory to glory,” the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays. [5]

685 To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: “with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.” [6] For this reason, the divine mystery of the Holy Spirit was already treated in the context of Trinitarian “theology.” Here, however, we have to do with the Holy Spirit only in the divine “economy.”

686 The Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation. But in these “end times,” ushered in by the Son's redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person. Now can this divine plan, accomplished in Christ, the firstborn and head of the new creation, be embodied in mankind by the outpouring of the Spirit: as the Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

[1](#) 1 Cor 12:3.

[2](#) Gal 4:6.

[3](#) St. Irenaeus, Dem. ap. 7: SCh 62, 41-42.

[4](#) In 17:3.

[5](#) St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio theol., 5, 26 (= Oratio 31, 26): PG 36, 161-163.

[6](#) Nicene Creed; see above, par. 465.

ARTICLE 8

“I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT”

687 “No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” [\[7\]](#) Now God's Spirit, who reveals God, makes known to us Christ, his Word, his living Utterance, but the Spirit does not speak of himself. the Spirit who “has spoken through the prophets” makes us hear the Father's Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself. We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. the Spirit of truth who “unveils” Christ to us “will not speak on his own.” [\[8\]](#) Such properly divine self-effacement explains why “the world cannot receive (him), because it neither sees him nor knows him,” while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them. [\[9\]](#)

688 The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

- in the Scriptures he inspired;
- in the Tradition, to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses;
- in the Church's Magisterium, which he assists;
- in the sacramental liturgy, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ;
- in prayer, wherein he intercedes for us;
- in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up;
- in the signs of apostolic and missionary life;
- in the witness of saints through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.

[7](#) 1 Cor 2:11.

[8](#) Jn 16:13.

[9](#) Jn 14:17.

I. The Joint Mission of the Son and the Spirit

689 The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God.[\[10\]](#) Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church's faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure,

it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him.

690 Jesus is Christ, "anointed," because the Spirit is his anointing, and everything that occurs from the Incarnation on derives from this fullness.[11] When Christ is finally glorified,[12] he can in turn send the Spirit from his place with the Father to those who believe in him: he communicates to them his glory,[13] that is, the Holy Spirit who glorifies him.[14] From that time on, this joint mission will be manifested in the children adopted by the Father in the Body of his Son: the mission of the Spirit of adoption is to unite them to Christ and make them live in him:

The notion of anointing suggests . . . that there is no distance between the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, just as between the surface of the body and the anointing with oil neither reason nor sensation recognizes any intermediary, so the contact of the Son with the Spirit is immediate, so that anyone who would make contact with the Son by faith must first encounter the oil by contact. In fact there is no part that is not covered by the Holy Spirit. That is why the confession of the Son's Lordship is made in the Holy Spirit by those who receive him, the Spirit coming from all sides to those who approach the Son in faith.[15]

10 Cf.

⇒ Gal 4:6.

11 Cf. ⇒ Jn. 3:34.

12 ⇒ Jn 7:39.

13 Cf. ⇒ Jn 17:22.

14 Cf. ⇒ Jn 16:14.

15 St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16: PG 45, 1321A-B.

II. The Name, Titles, and Symbols of the Holy Spirit

The proper name of the Holy Spirit

691 "Holy Spirit" is the proper name of the one whom we adore and glorify with the Father and the Son. the Church has received this name from the Lord and professes it in the Baptism of her new children.[16]

The term "Spirit" translates the Hebrew word *ruah*, which, in its primary sense, means breath, air, wind. Jesus indeed uses the sensory image of the wind to suggest to Nicodemus the transcendent newness of him who is personally God's breath, the divine Spirit.¹⁷ On the other hand, "Spirit" and "Holy" are divine attributes common to the three divine persons. By joining the two terms, Scripture, liturgy, and theological language designate the inexpressible person of the Holy Spirit, without any possible equivocation with other uses of the terms "spirit" and "holy."

Titles of the Holy Spirit

692 When he proclaims and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls him the "Paraclete," literally, "he who is called to one's side," advocatus.¹⁸ "Paraclete" is commonly translated by "consoler," and Jesus is the first consoler.¹⁹ The Lord also called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth."²⁰

693 Besides the proper name of "Holy Spirit," which is most frequently used in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, we also find in St. Paul the titles: the Spirit of the promise,²¹ The Spirit of adoption,²² The Spirit of Christ,²³ The Spirit of the Lord,²⁴ and the Spirit of God²⁵ - and, in St. Peter, the Spirit of glory.²⁶

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

694 Water. the symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit."²⁷ Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified²⁸ as its source and welling up in us to eternal life.²⁹

695 Anointing. the symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit,³⁰ to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. Christ (in Hebrew "messiah") means the one "anointed" by God's Spirit. There were several anointed ones of the Lord in the Old Covenant, pre-eminently King David.³¹ But Jesus is God's Anointed in a unique way: the humanity the Son assumed was entirely anointed by the Holy Spirit. the Holy Spirit established him as "Christ."³² The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit who, through the angel, proclaimed him the Christ at his birth, and prompted Simeon to come to the temple to see the Christ of the Lord.³³ The Spirit filled Christ and the power of the Spirit went out from him in his acts of healing and of saving.³⁴ Finally, it was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.³⁵ Now, fully established as "Christ" in his humanity victorious over death, Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute - in their union with the humanity of the Son of God - that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ":³⁶ "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression.

696 Fire. While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. the prayer of the prophet Elijah, who "arose like fire" and whose "word burned like a torch," brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel.³⁷ This event was a "figure" of the fire of the Holy Spirit, who transforms what he touches. John the Baptist, who goes "before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah," proclaims Christ as the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."³⁸ Jesus will say of the Spirit: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!"³⁹ In the form of tongues "as of fire," the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples

on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself⁴⁰ The spiritual tradition has retained this symbolism of fire as one of the most expressive images of the Holy Spirit's actions.⁴¹ "Do not quench the Spirit."⁴²

697 Cloud and light. These two images occur together in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory - with Moses on Mount Sinai,⁴³ at the tent of meeting,⁴⁴ and during the wandering in the desert,⁴⁵ and with Solomon at the dedication of the Temple.⁴⁶ In the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures. the Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "overshadows" her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus.⁴⁷ On the mountain of Transfiguration, the Spirit in the "cloud came and overshadowed" Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John, and "a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"⁴⁸ Finally, the cloud took Jesus out of the sight of the disciples on the day of his ascension and will reveal him as Son of man in glory on the day of his final coming.⁴⁹

698 The seal is a symbol close to that of anointing. "The Father has set his seal" on Christ and also seals us in him.⁵⁰ Because this seal indicates the indelible effect of the anointing with the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the image of the seal (sphragis) has been used in some theological traditions to express the indelible "character" imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments.

699 The hand. Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them.⁵¹ In his name the apostles will do the same.⁵² Even more pointedly, it is by the Apostles' imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given.⁵³ The Letter to the Hebrews lists the imposition of hands among the "fundamental elements" of its teaching.⁵⁴ The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental epicleses.

700 The finger. "It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons."⁵⁵ If God's law was written on tablets of stone "by the finger of God," then the "letter from Christ" entrusted to the care of the apostles, is written "with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts."⁵⁶ The hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* invokes the Holy Spirit as the "finger of the Father's right hand."⁵⁷

701 The dove. At the end of the flood, whose symbolism refers to Baptism, a dove released by Noah returns with a fresh olive-tree branch in its beak as a sign that the earth was again habitable.⁵⁸ When Christ comes up from the water of his baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon him and remains with him.⁵⁹ The Spirit comes down and remains in the purified hearts of the baptized. In certain churches, the Eucharist is reserved in a metal receptacle in the form of a dove (columbarium) suspended above the altar. Christian iconography traditionally uses a dove to suggest the Spirit.

16 Cf. Mt 28:19.

17 In 3:5-8.

18 In 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

19 Cf. I Jn 2:1.
20 In 16:13.
21 Cf. Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13.
22 Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.
23 Rom 8:9.
24 2 Cor 3:17.
25 Rom 8:9, Rom 8:9 4; 15:19; 1 Cor 6:11; 7:40.
26 1 Pet 4:14.
27 1 Cor 12:13.
28 Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:8.
29 Cf. Jn 4:10-14; 7:38; Ex 17:1-6; Isa 55:1; Zech 14:8; 1 Cor 10:4; Rev 21:6; 22:17.
30 Cf. 1 In 2:20:27; 2 Cor 1:21.
31 Cf. Ex 30:22-32; 1 Sam 16:13.
32 Cf. Lk 4 18-19; Isa 61:1.
33 Cf. Lk 2:11, 26-27.
34 Cf. Lk 4:1; 6:19; 8:46.
35 Cf. Rom 1:4; 8:11.
36 Eph 4:13; Cf. Acts 2:36.
37 Sir 48:1; Cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39.
38 Lk 1:17; 3:16.
39 Lk 12:49.
40 Acts 2:3-4.
41 Cf. St. John of the Cross, the Living Flame of Love, in the Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, tr. K. Kavanaugh, OCD, and O. Rodriguez, OCD (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 577 ff.
42 1 Thess 5:19.
43 Cf. Ex 24:15-18.
44 Cf. Ex 33:9-10.
45 Cf. Ex 40:36-38; 1 Cor 10:1-2.
46 Cf. 1 Kings 8:10-12.
47 Lk 1:35.
48 Lk 9:34-35.
49 Cf. Acts 1:9; Cf. Lk 21:27.
50 Jn 6:27; Cf. 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30.
51 Cf. Mk 6:5; 8:23; 10:16.
52 Cf. Mk 16:18; Acts 5:12; 14:3.
53 Cf. Acts 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6.
54 Cf. Heb 6:2.
55 Lk 11:20.
56 Ex 31:18; 2 Cor 3:3.
57 LH, Easter Season after Ascension, Hymn at Vespers: *digitus paternae dexterae*.
58 Cf. Gen 8:8-12.
59 Cf. Mt 3:16 and parallels.

III. God's Spirit and Word in the Time of the Promises

702 From the beginning until "the fullness of time,"⁶⁰ The joint mission of the Father's Word and Spirit remains hidden, but it is at work. God's Spirit prepares for the time of the Messiah. Neither is fully revealed but both are already promised, to be watched for and welcomed at their manifestation. So, for this reason, when the Church reads the Old Testament, she searches there for what the Spirit, "who has spoken through the prophets," wants to tell us about Christ.⁶¹

By "prophets" the faith of the Church here understands all whom the Holy Spirit inspired in the composition of the sacred books, both of the Old and the New Testaments. Jewish tradition distinguishes first the Law (the five first books or Pentateuch), then the Prophets (our historical and prophetic books) and finally the Writings (especially the wisdom literature, in particular the Psalms).⁶²

In creation

703 The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature:⁶³

It belongs to the Holy Spirit to rule, sanctify, and animate creation, for he is God, consubstantial with the Father and the Son.... Power over life pertains to the Spirit, for being God he preserves creation in the Father through the Son.⁶⁴

704 "God fashioned man with his own hands [that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form."⁶⁵

The Spirit of the promise

705 Disfigured by sin and death, man remains "in the image of God," in the image of the Son, but is deprived "of the glory of God,"⁶⁶ of his "likeness." the promise made to Abraham inaugurates the economy of salvation, at the culmination of which the Son himself will assume that "image"⁶⁷ and restore it in the Father's "likeness" by giving it again its Glory, the Spirit who is "the giver of life."

706 Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ In Abraham's progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself,⁶⁹ in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."⁷⁰ God commits himself by his own solemn oath to giving his beloved Son and "the promised Holy Spirit . . . [who is] the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."⁷¹

In Theophanies and the Law

707 Theophanies (manifestations of God) light up the way of the promise, from the patriarchs to Moses and from Joshua to the visions that inaugurated the missions of the great prophets.

Christian tradition has always recognized that God's Word allowed himself to be seen and heard in these theophanies, in which the cloud of the Holy Spirit both revealed him and concealed him in its shadow.

708 This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law.⁷² God gave the letter of the Law as a "pedagogue" to lead his people towards Christ.⁷³ But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine "likeness," along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts,⁷⁴ enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit. the lamentations of the Psalms bear witness to this.

In the Kingdom and the Exile

709 The Law, the sign of God's promise and covenant, ought to have governed the hearts and institutions of that people to whom Abraham's faith gave birth. "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, . . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."⁷⁵ But after David, Israel gave in to the temptation of becoming a kingdom like other nations. the Kingdom, however, the object of the promise made to David,⁷⁶ would be the work of the Holy Spirit; it would belong to the poor according to the Spirit.

710 The forgetting of the Law and the infidelity to the covenant end in death: it is the Exile, apparently the failure of the promises, which is in fact the mysterious fidelity of the Savior God and the beginning of a promised restoration, but according to the Spirit. the People of God had to suffer this purification.⁷⁷ In God's plan, the Exile already stands in the shadow of the Cross, and the Remnant of the poor that returns from the Exile is one of the most transparent prefigurations of the Church.

Expectation of the Messiah and his Spirit

711 "Behold, I am doing a new thing."⁷⁸ Two prophetic lines were to develop, one leading to the expectation of the Messiah, the other pointing to the announcement of a new Spirit. They converge in the small Remnant, the people of the poor, who await in hope the "consolation of Israel" and "the redemption of Jerusalem."⁷⁹

We have seen earlier how Jesus fulfills the prophecies concerning himself. We limit ourselves here to those in which the relationship of the Messiah and his Spirit appears more clearly.

712 The characteristics of the awaited Messiah begin to appear in the "Book of Emmanuel" ("Isaiah said this when he saw his glory,"⁸⁰ speaking of Christ), especially in the first two verses of Isaiah 11: 81

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

713 The Messiah's characteristics are revealed above all in the "Servant songs."⁸² These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus' Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our "form as slave."⁸³ Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life.

714 This is why Christ inaugurates the proclamation of the Good News by making his own the following passage from Isaiah:⁸⁴

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor.

715 The prophetic texts that directly concern the sending of the Holy Spirit are oracles by which God speaks to the heart of his people in the language of the promise, with the accents of "love and fidelity."⁸⁵ St. Peter will proclaim their fulfillment on the morning of Pentecost.⁸⁶ According to these promises, at the "end time" the Lord's Spirit will renew the hearts of men, engraving a new law in them. He will gather and reconcile the scattered and divided peoples; he will transform the first creation, and God will dwell there with men in peace.

716 The People of the "poor"⁸⁷ - those who, humble and meek, rely solely on their God's mysterious plans, who await the justice, not of men but of the Messiah - are in the end the great achievement of the Holy Spirit's hidden mission during the time of the promises that prepare for Christ's coming. It is this quality of heart, purified and enlightened by the Spirit, which is expressed in the Psalms. In these poor, the Spirit is making ready "a people prepared for the Lord."⁸⁸

60 Gal 4:4.

61 Cf. 2 Cor 3:14; Jn 5:39, 46.

62 Cf. Lk 24:44.

63 Cf. Pss 33:6; 104:30; Gen 1:2; 2:7; Eccl 3:20-21; Ezek 37:10.

64 Byzantine liturgy, Sundays of the second mode, Troparion of Morning Prayer.

65 St. Irenaeus, Dem ap. 11: SCh 62, 48-49.

66 Rom 3:23.

67 Cf. Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7.

68 Cf. Gen 18:1-15; Lk 1:26-38. 54-55; Jn 1:12-13; Rom 4:16-21.

69 Cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:16.

70 Cf. In 11:52.

71 Eph 1:13-14; cf. Gen 22:17-19; Lk 1:73; Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32; Gal 3:14.

72 Cf. Ex 19- 20; Deut 1-11; 29-30.

73 Gal 3:24.

74 Cf. Rom 3:20.

75 Ex 19:5-6; Cf. 1 Pet 2:9.

76 Cf. 2 Sam 7; Ps 89; Lk 1:32-33.

77 Cf. Lk 24:26.
78 Isa 43:19.
79 Cf. Zeph 2:3; Lk 2:25, 38.
80 Jn 12:41; cf. Isa 6-12.
81 Isa 11:1-2.
82 Cf. Isa 42:1-9; cf. Mt 12:18-21; Jn 1:32-34; then cf. Isa 49:1-6; cf. Mt 3:17; Lk 2:32; finally cf. Isa 50:4-10 and Isa 52:13-53:12.
83 Phil 2:7.
84 Isa 61:1-2; cf. Lk 4:18-19.
85 Cf. Ezek 11:19; 36:25-28; 37:1-14; Jer 31:31-34; and cf. Joel 3:1-5.
86 Cf. Acts 2:17-21.
87 Cf. Zeph 2:3; Pss 22:27; 34:3; Isa 49:13; 61:1; etc.
88 Lk 1:17.

IV. The Spirit of Christ in the Fullness of Time

John, precursor, prophet, and baptist

717 "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."⁸⁹ John was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"⁹⁰ by Christ himself, whom the Virgin Mary had just conceived by the Holy Spirit. Mary's visitation to Elizabeth thus became a visit from God to his people.⁹¹

718 John is "Elijah (who) must come."⁹² The fire of the Spirit dwells in him and makes him the forerunner of the coming Lord. In John, the precursor, the Holy Spirit completes the work of "[making] ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁹³

719 John the Baptist is "more than a prophet."⁹⁴ In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah.⁹⁵ He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the "voice" of the Consoler who is coming.⁹⁶ As the Spirit of truth will also do, John "came to bear witness to the light."⁹⁷ In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels.⁹⁸ "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. and I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.... Behold, the Lamb of God."⁹⁹

720 Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," prefiguring what he would achieve with and in Christ. John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth.¹⁰⁰

"Rejoice, you who are full of grace"

721 Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his

Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the dwelling place where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary.¹⁰¹ Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the "Seat of Wisdom."

In her, the "wonders of God" that the Spirit was to fulfill in Christ and the Church began to be manifested:

722 The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"¹⁰² should herself be "full of grace." She was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty. It was quite correct for the angel Gabriel to greet her as the "Daughter of Zion": "Rejoice."¹⁰³ It is the thanksgiving of the whole People of God, and thus of the Church, which Mary in her canticle¹⁰⁴ lifts up to the Father in the Holy Spirit while carrying within her the eternal Son.

723 In Mary, the Holy Spirit fulfills the plan of the Father's loving goodness. With and through the Holy Spirit, the Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. By the Holy Spirit's power and her faith, her virginity became uniquely fruitful.¹⁰⁵

724 In Mary, the Holy Spirit manifests the Son of the Father, now become the Son of the Virgin. She is the burning bush of the definitive theophany. Filled with the Holy Spirit she makes the Word visible in the humility of his flesh. It is to the poor and the first representatives of the gentiles that she makes him known.¹⁰⁶

725 Finally, through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men, the objects of God's merciful love,¹⁰⁷ into communion with Christ. and the humble are always the first to accept him: shepherds, magi, Simeon and Anna, the bride and groom at Cana, and the first disciples.

726 At the end of this mission of the Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve ("mother of the living"), the mother of the "whole Christ."¹⁰⁸ As such, she was present with the Twelve, who "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer,"¹⁰⁹ at the dawn of the "end time" which the Spirit was to inaugurate on the morning of Pentecost with the manifestation of the Church.

Christ Jesus

727 The entire mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of time, is contained in this: that the Son is the one anointed by the Father's Spirit since his Incarnation - Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

Everything in the second chapter of the Creed is to be read in this light. Christ's whole work is in fact a joint mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here, we shall mention only what has to do with Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and the gift of him by the glorified Lord.

728 Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully, until he himself has been glorified through his Death and Resurrection. Nevertheless, little by little he alludes to him even in his teaching of the multitudes, as when he reveals that his own flesh will be food for the life of the world.¹¹⁰ He also alludes to the Spirit in speaking to Nicodemus,¹¹¹ to the Samaritan woman,¹¹² and to those

who take part in the feast of Tabernacles.¹¹³ To his disciples he speaks openly of the Spirit in connection with prayer¹¹⁴ and with the witness they will have to bear.¹¹⁵

729 Only when the hour has arrived for his glorification does Jesus promise the coming of the Holy Spirit, since his Death and Resurrection will fulfill the promise made to the fathers.¹¹⁶ The Spirit of truth, the other Paraclete, will be given by the Father in answer to Jesus' prayer; he will be sent by the Father in Jesus' name; and Jesus will send him from the Father's side, since he comes from the Father. the Holy Spirit will come and we shall know him; he will be with us for ever; he will remain with us. the Spirit will teach us everything, remind us of all that Christ said to us and bear witness to him. the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and will glorify Christ. He will prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

730 At last Jesus' hour arrives:¹¹⁷ he commends his spirit into the Father's hands¹¹⁸ at the very moment when by his death he conquers death, so that, "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,"¹¹⁹ he might immediately give the Holy Spirit by "breathing" on his disciples.¹²⁰ From this hour onward, the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."¹²¹

89 Jn 1:6.

90 Lk 1:15, 41.

91 Cf. Lk 1:68.

92 Mt 17:10-13; cf. Lk 1:78.

93 Lk 1:17.

94 Lk 7:26.

95 Cf. Mt 11:13-14.

96 Jn 1:23; cf. Isa 40:1-3.

97 Jn 1:7; cf. Jn 15:26; 5:35.

98 Cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12.

99 Jn 1:33-36.

100 Cf Jn 3:5.

101 Cf. Prov 8:1- 9:6; Sir 24.

102 Col 2:9.

103 Cf. Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:14.

104 Cf. Lk 1:46-55.

105 Cf. Lk 1:26-38; Rom 4:18-21; Gal 4:26-28.

106 Cf. Lk 1:15-19; Mt 2:11.

107 Cf. Lk 2:14.

108 Cf. Jn 19:25-27.

109 Acts 1:14.

110 Cf. Jn 6:27, 51, 62-63.

111 Cf. Jn 3:5-8.

112 Cf. Jn 4:10, 14, 23-24.

113 Cf. Jn 7:37-39.

114 Cf. Lk 11:13.

115 Cf. Mt 10:19-20.

116 Cf. Jn 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 17:26.
117 Cf. Jn 13:1; 17:1.
118 Cf. Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30.
119 Rom 6:4.
120 Cf. Jn 20:22.
121 Jn 20:21; cf. Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47-48; Acts 1:8.

V. The Spirit and the Church In the Last Days

Pentecost

731 On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.¹²²

732 On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed. Since that day, the Kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humility of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the "last days," the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated.

We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith: we adore the indivisible Trinity, who has saved us.¹²³

The Holy Spirit - God's gift

733 "God is Love"¹²⁴ and love is his first gift, containing all others. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."¹²⁵

734 Because we are dead or at least wounded through sin, the first effect of the gift of love is the forgiveness of our sins. the communion of the Holy Spirit¹²⁶ in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin.

735 He, then, gives us the "pledge" or "first fruits" of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as "God (has) loved us."¹²⁷ This love (the "charity" of ? 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received "power" from the Holy Spirit.¹²⁸

736 By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit: . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."¹²⁹ "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit."¹³⁰

Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called

children of light and given a share in eternal glory.¹³¹

The Holy Spirit and the Church

737 The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. the Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. the Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may "bear much fruit."¹³²

738 Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity (the topic of the next article):

All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us, . . . and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity.¹³³

739 Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body. (This will be the topic of Part Two of the Catechism.)

740 These "mighty works of God," offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit. (This will be the topic of Part Three.)

741 "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words."¹³⁴ The Holy Spirit, the artisan of God's works, is the master of prayer. (This will be the topic of Part Four.)

122 Cf. Acts 2:33-36.

123 Byzantine liturgy, Pentecost Vespers, Troparion, repeated after communion.

124 1 Jn 4:8,16.

125 Rom 5:5.

126 2 Cor 13:14.
127 1 Jn 4: 12; cf. Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:21.
128 Acts 1:8; cf. 1 Cor 13
129 Gal 5:22-23.
130 Gal 5:25; cf. Mt 16:24-26.
131 St. Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 15,36: PG 32,132.
132 Jn 15:8, 16.
133 St. Cyril of Alexandria, In Jo. ev., 11,11: PG 74, 561.
134 Rom 8:26.

IN BRIEF

742 "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (? Gal 4:6).

743 From the beginning to the end of time, whenever God sends his Son, he always sends his Spirit: their mission is conjoined and inseparable.

744 In the fullness of time the Holy Spirit completes in Mary all the preparations for Christ's coming among the People of God. By the action of the Holy Spirit in her, the Father gives the world Emmanuel "God-with-us" (? Mt 1:23).

745 The Son of God was consecrated as Christ (Messiah) by the anointing of the Holy Spirit at his Incarnation (cf ? Ps 2:6-7).

746 By his Death and his Resurrection, Jesus is constituted in glory as Lord and Christ (cf ? Acts 2:36). From his fullness, he poured out the Holy Spirit on the apostles and the Church.

747 The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men.

Article 9

"I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH"

748 "Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church."¹³⁵ These words open the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. By choosing this starting point, the Council demonstrates that the article of faith about the Church depends entirely on the articles concerning Christ Jesus. the Church has no other light than Christ's; according to a favorite image of the Church Fathers, the Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun.

749 The article concerning the Church also depends entirely on the article about the Holy Spirit, which immediately precedes it. "Indeed, having shown that the Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness, we now confess that it is he who has endowed the Church with holiness."¹³⁶ The Church is, in a phrase used by the Fathers, the place "where the Spirit flourishes."¹³⁷

750 To believe that the Church is "holy" and "catholic," and that she is "one" and "apostolic" (as the Nicene Creed adds), is inseparable from belief in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles' Creed we profess "one Holy Church" (Credo . . . Ecclesiam), and not to believe in the Church, so as not to confuse God with his works and to attribute clearly to God's goodness all the gifts he has bestowed on his Church.¹³⁸

135 LG 1; cf. Mk 16:15.

136 Roman Catechism I, 10, 1.

137 St. Hippolytus, Trad. Ap. 35: SCh 11, 118.

138 Roman Catechism I, 10, 22.

Paragraph 1. THE CHURCH IN GOD'S PLAN

I. NAMES AND IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

751 The word "Church" (Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ek-ka-lein, to "call out of") means a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose.¹³⁹ Ekklesia is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people.¹⁴⁰ By calling itself "Church," the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly. In the Church, God is "calling together" his people from all the ends of the earth. the equivalent Greek term Kyriake, from which the English word Church and the German Kirche are derived, means "what belongs to the Lord."

752 In Christian usage, the word "church" designates the liturgical assembly,¹⁴¹ but also the local community¹⁴² or the whole universal community of believers.¹⁴³ These three meanings are inseparable. "The Church" is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body.

Symbols of the Church

753 In Scripture, we find a host of interrelated images and figures through which Revelation speaks of the inexhaustible mystery of the Church. the images taken from the Old Testament are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body.¹⁴⁴ Around this center are grouped images taken "from the life of the shepherd or from cultivation of the land, from the art of building or from family life and marriage."¹⁴⁵

754 "The Church is, accordingly, a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ. It is also the flock of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are unfailingly nourished and led by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and Prince of Shepherds, who gave his life for his sheep.146

755 "The Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God. On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about again. That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing.147

756 "Often, too, the Church is called the building of God. the Lord compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the corner-stone. On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles and from it the Church receives solidity and unity. This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God in which his family dwells; the household of God in the Spirit; the dwelling-place of God among men; and, especially, the holy temple. This temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are built into it. It is this holy city that is seen by John as it comes down out of heaven from God when the world is made anew, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.148

757 "The Church, further, which is called 'that Jerusalem which is above' and 'our mother', is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb. It is she whom Christ 'loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her.' It is she whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom he constantly 'nourishes and cherishes.'"149

II. THE CHURCH'S ORIGIN, FOUNDATION AND MISSION

758 We begin our investigation of the Church's mystery by meditating on her origin in the Holy Trinity's plan and her progressive realization in history.

A plan born in the Father's heart

759 "The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe and chose to raise up men to share in his own divine life,"150 to which he calls all men in his Son. "The Father . . . determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ."151 This "family of God" is gradually formed and takes shape during the stages of human history, in keeping with the Father's plan. In fact, "already present in figure at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and the old Advance. Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time."152

The Church - foreshadowed from the world's beginning

760 Christians of the first centuries said, "The world was created for the sake of the Church."¹⁵³ God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the "convocation" of men in Christ, and this "convocation" is the Church. the Church is the goal of all things,¹⁵⁴ and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angels' fall and man's sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of his arm and the whole measure of the love he wanted to give the world:

Just as God's will is creation and is called "the world," so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called "the Church."¹⁵⁵

The Church - prepared for in the Old Covenant

761 The gathering together of the People of God began at the moment when sin destroyed the communion of men with God, and that of men among themselves. the gathering together of the Church is, as it were, God's reaction to the chaos provoked by sin. This reunification is achieved secretly in the heart of all peoples: "In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable" to God.¹⁵⁶

762 The remote preparation for this gathering together of the People of God begins when he calls Abraham and promises that he will become the father of a great people.¹⁵⁷ Its immediate preparation begins with Israel's election as the People of God. By this election, Israel is to be the sign of the future gathering of All nations.¹⁵⁸ But the prophets accuse Israel of breaking the covenant and behaving like a prostitute. They announce a new and eternal covenant. "Christ instituted this New Covenant."¹⁵⁹

The Church - instituted by Christ Jesus

763 It was the Son's task to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason for his being sent.¹⁶⁰ "The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures."¹⁶¹ To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. the Church "is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery."¹⁶²

764 "This Kingdom shines out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ."¹⁶³ To welcome Jesus' word is to welcome "the Kingdom itself."¹⁶⁴ The seed and beginning of the Kingdom are the "little flock" of those whom Jesus came to gather around him, the flock whose shepherd he is.¹⁶⁵ They form Jesus' true family.¹⁶⁶ To those whom he thus gathered around him, he taught a new "way of acting" and a prayer of their own.¹⁶⁷

765 The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head.¹⁶⁸ Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem.¹⁶⁹ The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot.¹⁷⁰ By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church.

766 The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross. "The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus."171 "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the 'wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.'"172 As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross.173

The Church - revealed by the Holy Spirit

767 "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."174 Then "the Church was openly displayed to the crowds and the spread of the Gospel among the nations, through preaching, was begun."175 As the "convocation" of all men for salvation, the Church in her very nature is missionary, sent by Christ to all the nations to make disciples of them.176

768 So that she can fulfill her mission, the Holy Spirit "bestows upon [the Church] varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her."177 "Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth the seed and the beginning of that kingdom."178

The Church - perfected in glory

769 "The Church . . . will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven,"179 at the time of Christ's glorious return. Until that day, "the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world's persecutions and God's consolations."180 Here below she knows that she is in exile far from the Lord, and longs for the full coming of the Kingdom, when she will "be united in glory with her king."181 The Church, and through her the world, will not be perfected in glory without great trials. Only then will "all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect,' . . . be gathered together in the universal Church in the Father's presence."182

III. THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

770 The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it. It is only "with the eyes of faith"183 that one can see her in her visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life.

The Church - both visible and spiritual

771 "The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men."184 The Church is at the same time:

- a "society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ;
- the visible society and the spiritual community;
- the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches."185

These dimensions together constitute "one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element":186

The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world, but as a pilgrim, so constituted that in her the human is directed toward and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, the object of our quest.187

O humility! O sublimity! Both tabernacle of cedar and sanctuary of God; earthly dwelling and celestial palace; house of clay and royal hall; body of death and temple of light; and at last both object of scorn to the proud and bride of Christ! She is black but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, for even if the labor and pain of her long exile may have discolored her, yet heaven's beauty has adorned her.188

The Church - mystery of men's union with God

772 It is in the Church that Christ fulfills and reveals his own mystery as the purpose of God's plan: "to unite all things in him."189 St. Paul calls the nuptial union of Christ and the Church "a great mystery." Because she is united to Christ as to her bridegroom, she becomes a mystery in her turn.190 Contemplating this mystery in her, Paul exclaims: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."191

773 In the Church this communion of men with God, in the "love [that] never ends," is the purpose which governs everything in her that is a sacramental means, tied to this passing world.192

"[The Church's] structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ's members. and holiness is measured according to the 'great mystery' in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom."193 Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church's mystery as "the bride without spot or wrinkle."194 This is why the "Marian" dimension of the Church precedes the "Petrine."195

The universal Sacrament of Salvation

774 The Greek word *mysterion* was translated into Latin by two terms: *mystenum* and *sacramentum*. In later usage the term *sacramentum* emphasizes the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation which was indicated by the term *mystenum*. In this sense, Christ himself is the mystery of salvation: "For there is no other mystery of God, except Christ."196 The saving work of his holy and sanctifying humanity is the sacrament of salvation, which is revealed and active in the Church's sacraments (which the Eastern Churches also call "the holy mysteries"). the seven sacraments are the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the head throughout the Church which is his Body. the Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies. It is in this analogical sense, that the Church is

called a "sacrament."

775 "The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men."¹⁹⁷ The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the inner union of men with God. Because men's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the unity of the human race. In her, this unity is already begun, since she gathers men "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues";¹⁹⁸ at the same time, the Church is the "sign and instrument" of the full realization of the unity yet to come.

776 As sacrament, the Church is Christ's instrument. "She is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all," "the universal sacrament of salvation," by which Christ is "at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for men."¹⁹⁹ The Church "is the visible plan of God's love for humanity," because God desires "that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit."²⁰⁰

IN BRIEF

777 The word "Church" means "convocation." It designates the assembly of those whom God's Word "convokes," i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ.

778 The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth (cf. Rev 14:4).

779 The Church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ. She is one, yet formed of two components, human and divine. That is her mystery, which only faith can accept.

780 The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men.

139 Cf. Acts 19:39.

140 Cf. Ex 19.

141 Cf. 1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 28, 34, 35.

142 Cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 16:1.

143 Cf. 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6.

144 Cf. Eph 1:22; Col 1:18; LG 9.

145 LG 6.

146 LG 6; Cf. Jn 10:1-10; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11-31; Jn 10:11; 1 Pet 5:4; Jn 10:11-16.

147 LG 6; Cf. 1 Cor 39; Rom 11:13-26; Mt 21:32-43 and parallels; Isa 51-7;
Jn 15:1-5.
148 LG 6; Cf. 1 Cor 3:9; Mt 21:42 and parallels; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7; PS 118:22; 1 Cor 3:11; 1
Tim 3:15; Eph 2:19-22; Rev 21:3; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 21:1-2.
149 LG 6; Cf. Gal 4:26; Rev 12:17; 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17; Eph 5:25-26, 29.
150 LG 2.
151 LG 2.
152 LG 2.
153 Pastor Hermae, Vision 2, 4, 1: PG 2,899; cf. Aristides, Apol. 16, 6;
St. Justin, Apol. 2,7: PG 6, 456; Tertullian, Apol. 31, 3; 32, 1: PL 1, 508-509.
154 Cf. St. Epiphanius, Panarion 1, 1, 5: PG 41, 181C.
155 Clement of Alex., Paed. 1, 6, 27: PG 8, 281.
156 Acts 10:35; cf. LG 9; 13; 16.
157 Cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5-6.
158 Cf. Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; Isa 2:2-5; Mic 4:1-4.
159 LG 9; cf. Hos 1; Isa 1:2-4; Jer 2; 31:31-34; Isa 55:3.
160 Cf. LG 3; AG 3.
161 LG 5.
162 LG 3.
163 LG 5.
164 LG 5.
165 Lk 12:32; cf. Mt 10:16; 26:31; In 10:1-21.
166 Cf. Mt 12:49.
167 Cf. Mt 5- 6.
168 Cf. Mk 3:14-15.
169 Cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 21:12-14.
170 Cf. Mk 6:7; Lk 10:1-2; Mt 10:25; Jn 15:20.
171 LG 3; cf. Jn 19:34.
172 SC 5.
173 Cf. St. Ambrose, In Luc. 2, 85-89 PL 15,1666-1668.
174 LG 4; Cf. Jn 17:4.
175 AG 4.
176 Cf. Mt 28:19-20; AG 2; 5-6.
177 LG 4.
178 LG 5.
179 LG 48.
180 St. Augustine, De civ. Dei, 18, 51: PL 41, 614; Cf. LG 8.
181 LG 5; Cf. 6; 2 Cor 5:6.
182 LG 2.
183 Roman Catechism 1, 10, 20.
184 LG 8 # 1.
185 LG 8.
186 LG 8.
187 SC 2, Cf. Heb 13:14.
188 St. Bernard of Clairvaux, In Cant. Sermo 27:14 PL 183:920D.
189 Eph 1:10.

190 Eph 5:32; 3:9-11; 5:25-27.
191 Col 1:27.
192 1 Cor 13:8; cf. LG 48.
193 John Paul II, MD 27.
194 Eph 5:27.
195 Cf. John Paul II, MD 27.
196 St. Augustine, Ep. 187,11,34: PL 33, 846.
197 LG 1.
198 Rev 7:9.
199 LG 9 # 2, 48 # 2; GS 45 # 1.
200 Paul VI, June 22, 1973; AG 7 # 2; cf. LG 17.

Paragraph 2. THE CHURCH - PEOPLE OF GOD, BODY OF CHRIST, TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. THE CHURCH - PEOPLE OF GOD

781 "At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him. He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness. He therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He gradually instructed this people.... All these things, however, happened as a preparation for and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ . . . the New Covenant in his blood; he called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit."²⁰¹

Characteristics of the People of God

782 The People of God is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political, or cultural groups found in history:

- It is the People of God: God is not the property of any one people. But he acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not a people: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."²⁰²
- One becomes a member of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit,"²⁰³ that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism.
- This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people."
- "The status of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple."
- "Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us."²⁰⁴ This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁵
- Its mission is to be salt of the earth and light of the world.²⁰⁶ This people is "a most sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race."
- Its destiny, finally, "is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by him at the end of

time."207

A priestly, prophetic, and royal people

783 Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. the whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them.208

784 On entering the People of God through faith and Baptism, one receives a share in this people's unique, priestly vocation: "Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, has made this new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father.' the baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood."209

785 "The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office," above all in the supernatural sense of faith that belongs to the whole People, lay and clergy, when it "unfailingly adheres to this faith . . . once for all delivered to the saints,"210 and when it deepens its understanding and becomes Christ's witness in the midst of this world.

786 Finally, the People of God shares in the royal office of Christ. He exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself through his death and Resurrection.211 Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."212 For the Christian, "to reign is to serve him," particularly when serving "the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder."213 The People of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ.

The sign of the cross makes kings of all those reborn in Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them as priests, so that, apart from the particular service of our ministry, all spiritual and rational Christians are recognized as members of this royal race and sharers in Christ's priestly office. What, indeed, is as royal for a soul as to govern the body in obedience to God? and what is as priestly as to dedicate a pure conscience to the Lord and to offer the spotless offerings of devotion on the altar of the heart?214

II. THE CHURCH - BODY OF CHRIST

The Church is communion with Jesus

787 From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings.215 Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you.... I am the vine, you are the branches."216 and he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."217

788 When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit.218 As a result

communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."²¹⁹

789 The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body. Three aspects of the Church as the Body of Christ are to be more specifically noted: the unity of all her members with each other as a result of their union with Christ; Christ as head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.

"One Body"

790 Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification."²²⁰ This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which "really sharing in the body of the Lord, . . . we are taken up into communion with him and with one another."²²¹

791 The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church."²²² The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice."²²³ Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."²²⁴

"Christ is the Head of this Body"

792 Christ "is the head of the body, the Church."²²⁵ He is the principle of creation and redemption. Raised to the Father's glory, "in everything he (is) preeminent,"²²⁶ especially in the Church, through whom he extends his reign over all things.

793 Christ unites us with his Passover: all his members must strive to resemble him, "until Christ be formed" in them.²²⁷ "For this reason we . . . are taken up into the mysteries of his life, . . . associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified."²²⁸

794 Christ provides for our growth: to make us grow toward him, our head,²²⁹ he provides in his Body, the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation.

795 Christ and his Church thus together make up the "whole Christ" (*Christus totus*). the Church is one with Christ. the saints are acutely aware of this unity:

Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself. Do you understand and grasp, brethren, God's grace toward us? Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members; he and we together are the whole man.... the fullness of Christ then is the head and the members. But what does "head and members" mean? Christ and the Church.²³⁰

Our redeemer has shown himself to be one person with the holy Church whom he has taken to himself.²³¹

Head and members form as it were one and the same mystical person.²³²

A reply of St. Joan of Arc to her judges sums up the faith of the holy doctors and the good sense of the believer: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter."²³³

The Church is the Bride of Christ

796 The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride. the theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist.²³⁴ The Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom."²³⁵ The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with him.²³⁶ The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb.²³⁷ "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her."²³⁸ He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body:²³⁹

This is the whole Christ, head and body, one formed from many . . . whether the head or members speak, it is Christ who speaks. He speaks in his role as the head (ex persona capitis) and in his role as body (ex persona corporis). What does this mean? "The two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church."²⁴⁰ and the Lord himself says in the Gospel: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."²⁴¹ They are, in fact, two different persons, yet they are one in the conjugal union, . . . as head, he calls himself the bridegroom, as body, he calls himself "bride."²⁴²

III. THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

797 "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church."²⁴³ "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members."²⁴⁴ The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God":²⁴⁵

Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted.... In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of

incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God.... For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace.²⁴⁶

798 The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body."²⁴⁷ He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity:²⁴⁸ by God's Word "which is able to build you up";²⁴⁹ by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body;²⁵⁰ by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts";²⁵¹ by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."²⁵²

Charisms

799 Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

800 Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.²⁵³

801 It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. "Their office (is) not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good,"²⁵⁴ so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good."²⁵⁵

IN BRIEF

802 Christ Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own" (? Titus 2:14).

803 "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (? 1 Pet 2:9).

804 One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (LG 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (AG 1).

805 The Church is the Body of Christ. Through the Spirit and his action in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body.

806 In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are

linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted.

807 The Church is this Body of which Christ is the head: she lives from him, in him, and for him; he lives with her and in her.

808 The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children.

809 The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. the Spirit is the soul, as it were, of the Mystical Body, the source of its life, of its unity in diversity, and of the riches of its gifts and charisms.

810 "Hence the universal Church is seen to be 'a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'" (LG 4 citing St. Cyprian, De Dom. orat. 23: PL 4, 553).

201 LG 9; Cf. Acts 10:35; 1 Cor 11:25.

202 1 Pet 2:9.

203 Jn 3:3-5.

204 Cf. Jn 13 34

205 Rom 8:2; Gal 5:25.

206 Cf. Mt 5:13-16.

207 LG 9 # 2.

208 Cf. John Paul II, RH 18-21.

209 LG 10; Cf. Heb 5:1-5; Rev 1:6.

210 LG 12; Cf. Jude 3.

211 Cf. Jn 12:32.

212 Mt 20:28.

213 LG 8; Cf. 36.

214 St. Leo the Great, Sermo 4, 1: PL 54, 149.

215 Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Mt 13:10-17; Lk 10:17-20; 22:28-30.

216 Jn 15:4-5.

217 Jn 6:56.

218 Cf. Jn 14:18; 20:22; Mt 28:20; Acts 2:33.

219 LG 7.

220 LG 7.

221 LG 7; cf. Rom 6:4-5; 1 Cor 12:13.

222 LG 7 # 3.

223 LG 7 # 3; cf. 1 Cor 12:26.

224 Gal 3:27-28.

225 Col 1:18.

226 Col 1:18.

227 Gal 4:19.

228 LG 7 # 4; cf. Phil 3:21; Rom 8:17.

229 Cf. Col 2:19; Eph 4:11-16.

230 St. Augustine, In Jo. ev, 21, 8: PL 35, 1568.

231 Pope St. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job*, praef., 14: PL 75, 525A.

232 St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 48, 2.
233 Acts of the Trial of Joan of Arc.
234 Jn 3:29.
235 Mk 2:19.
236 Cf. Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 1 Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2.
237 Cf. Rev 22:17; Eph 1:4. 5:27.
238 Eph 5:25-26.
239 Cf. Eph 5:29.
240 Eph 5:31-32.
241 Mt 19:6.
242 St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 74:4: PL 36, 948-949.
243 St. Augustine, Sermo 267, 4: PL 38, 1231D.
244 Pius XII, encyclical, Mystici Corporis: DS 3808.
245 2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21.
246 St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966.
247 Pius XII, encyclical, Mystici Corporis: DS 3808.
248 Cf. Eph 4:16.
249 Acts 20:32.
250 Cf. 1 Cor 12:13.
251 LG 7 # 2.
252 LG 12 # 2; cf. AA 3.
253 Cf. 1 Cor 13.
254 LG 12; cf. 30; 1 Thess 5:12, 19-21; John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, 24.
255 1 Cor 12:7.

Paragraph 3. THE CHURCH IS ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC

811 "This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic."²⁵⁶ These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other,²⁵⁷ indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. the Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

812 Only faith can recognize that the Church possesses these properties from her divine source. But their historical manifestations are signs that also speak clearly to human reason. As the First Vatican Council noted, the "Church herself, with her marvellous propagation, eminent holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in everything good, her catholic unity and invincible stability, is a great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefutable witness of her divine mission."²⁵⁸

I. THE CHURCH IS ONE

"The sacred mystery of the Church's unity" (UR 2)

813 The Church is one because of her source: "the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is

the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit."259 The Church is one because of her founder: for "the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body."260 The Church is one because of her "soul": "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity."261 Unity is of the essence of the Church:

What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."262

814 From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great diversity which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life. "Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions."263 The great richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity. and so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."264

815 What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony."265 But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
- apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family.266

816 "The sole Church of Christ [is that] which our Savior, after his Resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it.... This Church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in (subsistit in) the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him."267

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism explains: "For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the People of God."268

Wounds to unity

817 In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more

serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame."²⁶⁹ The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body - here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism²⁷⁰ - do not occur without human sin:

Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.²⁷¹

818 "However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church."²⁷²

819 "Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth"²⁷³ are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements."²⁷⁴ Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him,²⁷⁵ and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity."²⁷⁶

Toward unity

820 "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time."²⁷⁷ Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me."²⁷⁸ The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁹

821 Certain things are required in order to respond adequately to this call:

- a permanent renewal of the Church in greater fidelity to her vocation; such renewal is the driving-force of the movement toward unity;²⁸⁰
- conversion of heart as the faithful "try to live holier lives according to the Gospel";²⁸¹ for it is the unfaithfulness of the members to Christ's gift which causes divisions;
- prayer in common, because "change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism;'"²⁸²
- fraternal knowledge of each other;²⁸³
- ecumenical formation of the faithful and especially of priests;²⁸⁴

- dialogue among theologians and meetings among Christians of the different churches and communities;²⁸⁵
- collaboration among Christians in various areas of service to mankind.²⁸⁶ "Human service" is the idiomatic phrase.

822 Concern for achieving unity "involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike."²⁸⁷ But we must realize "that this holy objective - the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ - transcends human powers and gifts." That is why we place all our hope "in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit."²⁸⁸

II THE CHURCH IS HOLY

823 "The Church . . . is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her; he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God."²⁸⁹ The Church, then, is "the holy People of God,"²⁹⁰ and her members are called "saints."²⁹¹

824 United with Christ, the Church is sanctified by him; through him and with him she becomes sanctifying. "All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God."²⁹² It is in the Church that "the fullness of the means of salvation"²⁹³ has been deposited. It is in her that "by the grace of God we acquire holiness."²⁹⁴

825 "The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect."²⁹⁵ In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired: "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state - though each in his own way - are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect."²⁹⁶

826 Charity is the soul of the holiness to which all are called: it "governs, shapes, and perfects all the means of sanctification."²⁹⁷

If the Church was a body composed of different members, it couldn't lack the noblest of all; it must have a Heart, and a Heart BURNING WITH LOVE.

and I realized that this love alone was the true motive force which enabled the other members of the Church to act; if it ceased to function, the Apostles would forget to preach the gospel, the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood.

LOVE, IN FACT, IS THE VOCATION WHICH INCLUDES ALL OTHERS; IT'S A UNIVERSE OF ITS OWN, COMPRISING ALL TIME AND SPACE - IT'S ETERNAL!²⁹⁸

827 "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. the Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal."²⁹⁹ All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners.³⁰⁰ In everyone, the

weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time.³⁰¹ Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness:

The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁰²

828 By canonizing some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God's grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors.³⁰³ "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history."³⁰⁴ Indeed, "holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of her apostolic activity and missionary zeal."³⁰⁵

829 "But while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. and so they turn their eyes to Mary":³⁰⁶ in her, the Church is already the "all-holy."

III. THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

What does "catholic" mean?

830 The word "catholic" means "universal," in the sense of "according to the totality" or "in keeping with the whole." the Church is catholic in a double sense: First, the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. "Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church."³⁰⁷ In her subsists the fullness of Christ's body united with its head; this implies that she receives from him "the fullness of the means of salvation"³⁰⁸ which he has willed: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. the Church was, in this fundamental sense, catholic on the day of Pentecost³⁰⁹ and will always be so until the day of the Parousia.

831 Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race:³¹⁰

All men are called to belong to the new People of God. This People, therefore, while remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God's will may be fulfilled: he made human nature one in the beginning and has decreed that all his children who were scattered should be finally gathered together as one.... the character of universality which adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord himself whereby the Catholic Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity and all its goods, under Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit.³¹¹

Each particular Church is "catholic"

832 "The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, in so far as they are united to their pastors, are also quite appropriately called Churches in the New Testament.... In them the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated.... In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted."312

833 The phrase "particular church," which is the diocese (or eparchy), refers to a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession.³¹³ These particular Churches "are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists."³¹⁴

834 Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome "which presides in charity."³¹⁵ "For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord."³¹⁶ Indeed, "from the incarnate Word's descent to us, all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her."³¹⁷

835 "Let us be very careful not to conceive of the universal Church as the simple sum, or . . . the more or less anomalous federation of essentially different particular churches. In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission, but when she puts down her roots in a variety of cultural, social, and human terrains, she takes on different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world."³¹⁸ The rich variety of ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites, and theological and spiritual heritages proper to the local churches "unified in a common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided Church."³¹⁹

Who belongs to the Catholic Church?

836 "All men are called to this catholic unity of the People of God.... and to it, in different ways, belong or are ordered: the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God's grace to salvation."³²⁰

837 "Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who - by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion - are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but 'in body' not 'in heart.'"³²¹

838 "The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity

or communion under the successor of Peter."³²² Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church."³²³ With the Orthodox Churches, this communion is so profound "that it lacks little to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist."³²⁴

The Church and non-Christians

839 "Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways."³²⁵

The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People. When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People,³²⁶ "the first to hear the Word of God."³²⁷ The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ",³²⁸ "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable."³²⁹

840 and when one considers the future, God's People of the Old Covenant and the new People of God tend towards similar goals: expectation of the coming (or the return) of the Messiah. But one awaits the return of the Messiah who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God; the other awaits the coming of a Messiah, whose features remain hidden till the end of time; and the latter waiting is accompanied by the drama of not knowing or of misunderstanding Christ Jesus.

841 The Church's relationship with the Muslims. "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day."³³⁰

842 The Church's bond with non-Christian religions is in the first place the common origin and end of the human race:

All nations form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city. . .³³¹

843 The Catholic Church recognizes in other religions that search, among shadows and images, for the God who is unknown yet near since he gives life and breath and all things and wants all men to be saved. Thus, the Church considers all goodness and truth found in these religions as "a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life."³³²

844 In their religious behavior, however, men also display the limits and errors that disfigure the image of God in them:

Very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and served the creature rather than the Creator. Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair.³³³

845 To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. the Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. the Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood.³³⁴

"Outside the Church there is no salvation"

846 How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers?³³⁵ Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body:

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.³³⁶

847 This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.³³⁷

848 "Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize all men."³³⁸

Mission - a requirement of the Church's catholicity

849 The missionary mandate. "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men":³³⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age."³⁴⁰

850 The origin and purpose of mission. the Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit."³⁴¹ The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.³⁴²

851 Missionary motivation. It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on."³⁴³ Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth";³⁴⁴ that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

852 Missionary paths. the Holy Spirit is the protagonist, "the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission."³⁴⁵ It is he who leads the Church on her missionary paths. "This mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor; so the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death, a death from which he emerged victorious by his resurrection."³⁴⁶ So it is that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians."³⁴⁷

853 On her pilgrimage, the Church has also experienced the "discrepancy existing between the message she proclaims and the human weakness of those to whom the Gospel has been entrusted."³⁴⁸ Only by taking the "way of penance and renewal," the "narrow way of the cross," can the People of God extend Christ's reign.³⁴⁹ For "just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men."³⁵⁰

854 By her very mission, "the Church . . . travels the same journey as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: she is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God."³⁵¹ Missionary endeavor requires patience. It begins with the proclamation of the Gospel to peoples and groups who do not yet believe in Christ,³⁵² continues with the establishment of Christian communities that are "a sign of God's presence in the world,"³⁵³ and leads to the foundation of local churches.³⁵⁴ It must involve a process of inculturation if the Gospel is to take flesh in each people's culture.³⁵⁵ There will be times of defeat. "With regard to individuals, groups, and peoples it is only by degrees that [the Church] touches and penetrates them and so receives them into a fullness which is Catholic."³⁵⁶

855 The Church's mission stimulates efforts towards Christian unity.³⁵⁷ Indeed, "divisions among Christians prevent the Church from realizing in practice the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by Baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all its aspects."³⁵⁸

856 The missionary task implies a respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel.³⁵⁹ Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God."³⁶⁰ They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man."³⁶¹

IV. THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

857 The Church is apostolic because she is founded on the apostles, in three ways:

- she was and remains built on "the foundation of the Apostles,"³⁶² The witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ himself;³⁶³
- with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching,³⁶⁴ The "good deposit," the salutary words she has heard from the apostles;³⁶⁵
- she continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, "assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor":³⁶⁶

You are the eternal Shepherd
who never leaves his flock untended.
Through the apostles you watch over us and protect us always.
You made them shepherds of the flock
to share in the work of your Son....³⁶⁷

The Apostles' mission

858 Jesus is the Father's Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he "called to him those whom he desired; and he appointed twelve, whom also he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach."³⁶⁸ From then on, they would also be his "emissaries" (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ continues his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."³⁶⁹ The apostles' ministry is the continuation of his mission; Jesus said to the Twelve: "he who receives you receives me."³⁷⁰

859 Jesus unites them to the mission he received from the Father. As "the Son can do nothing of his own accord," but receives everything from the Father who sent him, so those whom Jesus sends can do nothing apart from him,³⁷¹ from whom they received both the mandate for their mission and the power to carry it out. Christ's apostles knew that they were called by God as "ministers of a new covenant," "servants of God," "ambassadors for Christ," "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."³⁷²

860 In the office of the apostles there is one aspect that cannot be transmitted: to be the chosen witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection and so the foundation stones of the Church. But their office also has a permanent aspect. Christ promised to remain with them always. the divine mission entrusted by Jesus to them "will continue to the end of time, since the Gospel they handed on is

the lasting source of all life for the Church. Therefore, . . . the apostles took care to appoint successors."373

The bishops - successors of the apostles

861 "In order that the mission entrusted to them might be continued after their death, [the apostles] consigned, by will and testament, as it were, to their immediate collaborators the duty of completing and consolidating the work they had begun, urging them to tend to the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit had appointed them to shepherd the Church of God. They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death other proven men should take over their ministry."374

862 "Just as the office which the Lord confided to Peter alone, as first of the apostles, destined to be transmitted to his successors, is a permanent one, so also endures the office, which the apostles received, of shepherding the Church, a charge destined to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops."375 Hence the Church teaches that "the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ."376

The apostolate

863 The whole Church is apostolic, in that she remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin: and in that she is "sent out" into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. "The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well." Indeed, we call an apostolate "every activity of the Mystical Body" that aims "to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth."377

864 "Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church's whole apostolate"; thus the fruitfulness of apostolate for ordained ministers as well as for lay people clearly depends on their vital union with Christ.378 In keeping with their vocations, the demands of the times and the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, the apostolate assumes the most varied forms. But charity, drawn from the Eucharist above all, is always "as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate."379

865 The Church is ultimately one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in her deepest and ultimate identity, because it is in her that "the Kingdom of heaven," the "Reign of God,"380 already exists and will be fulfilled at the end of time. the kingdom has come in the person of Christ and grows mysteriously in the hearts of those incorporated into him, until its full eschatological manifestation. Then all those he has redeemed and made "holy and blameless before him in love,"381 will be gathered together as the one People of God, the "Bride of the Lamb,"382 "the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God."383 For "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."384

IN BRIEF

866 The Church is one: she acknowledges one Lord, confesses one faith, is born of one Baptism, forms only one Body, is given life by the one Spirit, for the sake of one hope (cf ? Eph 4:3-5), at whose fulfillment all divisions will be overcome.

867 The Church is holy: the Most Holy God is her author; Christ, her bridegroom, gave himself up to make her holy; the Spirit of holiness gives her life. Since she still includes sinners, she is "the sinless one made up of sinners." Her holiness shines in the saints; in Mary she is already all-holy.

868 The Church is catholic: she proclaims the fullness of the faith. She bears in herself and administers the totality of the means of salvation. She is sent out to all peoples. She speaks to all men. She encompasses all times. She is "missionary of her very nature" (AG 2).

869 The Church is apostolic. She is built on a lasting foundation: "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (? Rev 21:14). She is indestructible (cf ? Mt 16:18). She is upheld infallibly in the truth: Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops.

870 "The sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, . . . subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines"(LG 8).

256 LG 8.

257 Cf. DS 2888.

258 Vatican Council I, DS Filius 3: DS 3013.

259 UR 2 # 5.

260 GS 78 # 3.

261 UR 2 # 2.

262 St. Clement of Alexandria, Paed. 1, 6, 42: PG 8,300.

263 LG 13 # 2.

264 Eph 4:3.

265 Col 3:14.

266 Cf. UR 2; LG 14; CIC, can. 205.

267 LG 8 # 2.

268 UR 3 # 5.

269 UR 3 # 1.

270 Cf. CIC, can. 751.

271 Origen, Hom. in Ezech. 9, 1: PG 13, 732.

272 UR 3 # 1.

273 LG 8 # 2.

274 UR 3 # 2; cf. LG 15.

275 Cf. UR 3.

276 Cf. LG 8.

277 UR 4 # 3.
278 Jn 17:21; cf. Heb 7:25.
279 Cf. UR 1.
280 Cf. UR 6.
281 UR 7 # 3.
282 UR 8 # 1.
283 Cf. UR 9.
284 Cf. UR 10.
285 Cf. UR 4; 9; 11.
286 Cf. UR 12.
287 UR 5.
288 UR 24 # 2.
289 LG 39; Cf. Eph 5 25-26.
290 LG 12.
291 Acts 913; 1 Cor 61; 16 1.
292 SC 10.
293 UR 3 # 5.
294 LG 48.
295 LG 48 # 3.
296 LG 11 # 3.
297 LG 42.
298 St. Therese of Lisieux, *Autobiography of a Saint*, tr. Ronald Knox (London: Harvill, 1958) 235.
299 LG 8 # 3; Cf. UR 3; 6; Heb 2:17; 726; 2 Cor 5:21.
300 Cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10.
301 Cf. Mt 13:24-30.
302 Paul VI, CPG # 19.
303 Cf. LG 40; 48-51.
304 John Paul II, CL 16, 3.
305 CL 17, 3.
306 LG 65; Cf. Eph 5:26-27.
307 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 8, 2: *Apostolic Fathers, II/2*, 311.
308 UR 3; AG 6; Eph 1:22-23.
309 Cf. AG 4.
310 Cf. Mt 28:19.
311 LG 13 ## 1-2; cf. Jn 11:52.
312 LG 26.
313 Cf. CD 11; CIC, cann. 368-369.
314 LG 23.
315 St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 1, 1: *Apostolic Fathers, II/2*, 192; cf. LG 13.
316 St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 2: PG 7/1, 849; Cf. *Vatican Council I DS 3057*.
317 St. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theo.*: PG 91 137-140.
318 Paul VI, EN 62.
319 LG 23.

320 LG 13.
321 LG 14.
322 LG 15.
323 UR 3.
324 Paul VI, Discourse, December 14, 1975; cf. UR 13-18.
325 LG 16.
326 Cf. NA 4.
327 Roman Missal, Good Friday 13: General Intercessions, VI.
328 Rom 9:4-5.
329 Rom 11:29.
330 LG 16; cf. NA 3.
331 NA 1.
332 LG 16; cf. NA 2; EN 53.
333 LG 16; cf. Rom 1:21, 25.
334 St. Augustine, Sermon 96, 7, 9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, De virg. 18, 118: PL 16, 297B; cf. already 1 Pet 3:20-21.
335 Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 73.21: PL 3, 1169; De unit.: PL 4, 509-536.
336 LG 14; cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5.
337 LG 16; cf. DS 3866-3872.
338 AG 7; cf. Heb 11:6; 1 Cor 9:16.
339 AG 1; cf. Mt 16:15.
340 Mt 28:19-20.
341 AG 2.
342 Cf. John Paul II, RMiss 23.
343 2 Cor 5:14; cf. AA 6; RMiss 11.
344 1 Tim 2:4.
345 John Paul II, RMiss 21.
346 AG 5.
347 Tertullian, Apol. 50, 13: PL 1, 603.
348 GS 43 # 6.
349 LG 8 # 3; 15; AG 1 # 3; cf. RMiss 12-20.
350 LG 8 # 3.
351 GS 40 # 2.
352 Cf. RMiss 42 47.
353 AG 15 # 1.
354 Cf. RMiss 48-49.
355 Cf. RMiss 52-54.
356 AG 6 # 2.
357 Cf. RMiss 50.
358 UR 4 # 8.
359 Cf. RMiss 55.
360 AG 9.
361 AG 9.
362 Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14.
363 Cf. Mt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:7-8; Gal 1:1; etc.
364 Cf. Acts 2:42.

365 Cf. 2 Tim 1:13-14.
366 AG 5.
367 Roman Missal, Preface of the Apostles I.
368 Mk 3:13-14.
369 Jn 20:21; cf. Jn 13:20; Jn 17:18.
370 Mt 10:40; cf. Lk 10:16.
371 Jn 5:19, 30; cf. Jn 15:5.
372 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 5:20; 1 Cor 4:1.
373 LG 20; cf. Mt 28:20.
374 LG 20; cf. Acts 20:28; St. Clement of Rome, Ad Cor. 42, 44: PG 1, 291-300.
375 LG 20 # 2.
376 LG 20 # 2.
377 AA 2.
378 AA 4; cf. Jn 15:5.
379 AA 3.
380 Rev 19:6.
381 Eph 1:4.
382 Rev 21:9.
383 Rev 21:10-11.
384 Rev 21:14.

Paragraph 4. CHRIST'S FAITHFUL - HIERARCHY, LAITY, CONSECRATED LIFE

871 “The Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through Baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world, in accord with the condition proper to each one.” [\[385\]](#)

872 “In virtue of their rebirth in Christ there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one's own condition and function.” [\[386\]](#)

873 The very differences which the Lord has willed to put between the members of his body serve its unity and mission. For “in the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God.” [\[387\]](#) Finally, “from both groups [hierarchy and laity] there exist Christian faithful who are consecrated to God in their own special manner and serve the salvific mission of the Church through the profession of the evangelical counsels.” [\[388\]](#)

I. THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

Why the ecclesial ministry?

874 Christ is himself the source of ministry in the Church. He instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal:

In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. the holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God . . . may attain to salvation. [389]

875 “How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? and how are they to hear without a preacher? and how can men preach unless they are sent?” [390] No one - no individual and no community - can proclaim the Gospel to himself: “Faith comes from what is heard.” [391] No one can give himself the mandate and the mission to proclaim the Gospel. the one sent by the Lord does not speak and act on his own authority, but by virtue of Christ's authority; not as a member of the community, but speaking to it in the name of Christ. No one can bestow grace on himself; it must be given and offered. This fact presupposes ministers of grace, authorized and empowered by Christ. From him, they receive the mission and faculty (“the sacred power”) to act in persona Christi Capitis. the ministry in which Christ's emissaries do and give by God's grace what they cannot do and give by their own powers, is called a “sacrament” by the Church's tradition. Indeed, the ministry of the Church is conferred by a special sacrament.

876 Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is its character as service. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly “slaves of Christ,” [392] in the image of him who freely took “the form of a slave” for us. [393] Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all. [394]

877 Likewise, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a collegial character. In fact, from the beginning of his ministry, the Lord Jesus instituted the Twelve as “the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy.” [395] Chosen together, they were also sent out together, and their fraternal unity would be at the service of the fraternal communion of all the faithful: they would reflect and witness to the communion of the divine persons. [396] For this reason every bishop exercises his ministry from within the episcopal college, in communion with the bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter and head of the college. So also priests exercise their ministry from within the presbyterium of the diocese, under the direction of their bishop.

878 Finally, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a personal character. Although Christ's ministers act in communion with one another, they also always act in a personal way. Each one is called personally: “You, follow me” [397] in order to be a personal witness within the common mission, to bear personal responsibility before him who

gives the mission, acting “in his person” and for other persons: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...”; “I absolve you....”

879 Sacramental ministry in the Church, then, is at once a collegial and a personal service, exercised in the name of Christ. This is evidenced by the bonds between the episcopal college and its head, the successor of St. Peter, and in the relationship between the bishop's pastoral responsibility for his particular church and the common solicitude of the episcopal college for the universal Church.

The episcopal college and its head, the Pope

880 When Christ instituted the Twelve, “he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them.” [398] Just as “by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.” [399]

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. [400] “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.” [401] This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.” [402] “For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” [403]

883 “The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head.” As such, this college has “supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff.” [404]

884 “The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council.” [405] But “there never is an ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least recognized as such by Peter's successor.” [406]

885 “This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head.” [407]

886 “The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches.” [408] As such, they “exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them,” [409] assisted by priests and deacons. But, as a member of the episcopal college, each bishop shares in the concern for all the Churches. [410] The bishops exercise this

care first “by ruling well their own Churches as portions of the universal Church,” and so contributing “to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches.” [411] They extend it especially to the poor, [412] to those persecuted for the faith, as well as to missionaries who are working throughout the world.

887 Neighboring particular Churches who share the same culture form ecclesiastical provinces or larger groupings called patriarchates or regions. [413] The bishops of these groupings can meet in synods or provincial councils. “In a like fashion, the episcopal conferences at the present time are in a position to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegiate spirit.” [414]

The teaching office

888 Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task “to preach the Gospel of God to all men,” in keeping with the Lord's command. [415] They are “heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers” of the apostolic faith “endowed with the authority of Christ.” [416]

889 In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a “supernatural sense of faith” the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, “unfailingly adheres to this faith.” [417]

890 The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. the exercise of this charism takes several forms:

891 “The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals.... the infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium,” above all in an Ecumenical Council. [418] When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine “for belief as being divinely revealed,” [419] and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions “must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.” [420] This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself. [421]

892 Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a “definitive manner,” they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary

teaching the faithful “are to adhere to it with religious assent” [422] which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.

The sanctifying office

893 The bishop is “the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,” [423] especially in the Eucharist which he offers personally or whose offering he assures through the priests, his co-workers. the Eucharist is the center of the life of the particular Church. the bishop and priests sanctify the Church by their prayer and work, by their ministry of the word and of the sacraments. They sanctify her by their example, “not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock.” [424] Thus, “together with the flock entrusted to them, they may attain to eternal life.” [425]

The governing office

894 “The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations, and example, but over and above that also by the authority and sacred power” which indeed they ought to exercise so as to edify, in the spirit of service which is that of their Master. [426]

895 “The power which they exercise personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary, and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church.” [427] But the bishops should not be thought of as vicars of the Pope. His ordinary and immediate authority over the whole Church does not annul, but on the contrary confirms and defends that of the bishops. Their authority must be exercised in communion with the whole Church under the guidance of the Pope.

896 The Good Shepherd ought to be the model and “form” of the bishop's pastoral office. Conscious of his own weaknesses, “the bishop . . . can have compassion for those who are ignorant and erring. He should not refuse to listen to his subjects whose welfare he promotes as of his very own children.... the faithful ... should be closely attached to the bishop as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father”: [428]

Let all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows his Father, and the college of presbyters as the apostles; respect the deacons as you do God's law. Let no one do anything concerning the Church in separation from the bishop. [429]

II. THE LAY FAITHFUL

897 “The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World.” [430]

The vocation of lay people

898 “By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will.... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and maybe to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.” [\[431\]](#)

899 The initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church:

Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the common Head, and of the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church. [\[432\]](#)

900 Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it. [\[433\]](#) The participation of lay people in Christ's priestly office

901 “Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvellously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit maybe produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. and so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives.” [\[434\]](#)

902 In a very special way, parents share in the office of sanctifying “by leading a conjugal life in the Christian spirit and by seeing to the Christian education of their children.” [\[435\]](#)

903 Lay people who possess the required qualities can be admitted permanently to the ministries of lector and acolyte. [\[436\]](#) When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of law.” [\[437\]](#)

Participation in Christ's prophetic office

904 “Christ . . . fulfills this prophetic office, not only by the hierarchy . . . but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the sense of the faith [sensus fidei] and the grace of the word” [438]

To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer. [439]

905 Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, “that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life.” For lay people, “this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.” [440]

This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers . . . or to the faithful. [441]

906 Lay people who are capable and trained may also collaborate in catechetical formation, in teaching the sacred sciences, and in use of the communications media. [442]

907 “In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons.” [443]

Participation in Christ's kingly office

908 By his obedience unto death, [444] Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of royal freedom, so that they might “by the self-abnegation of a holy life, overcome the reign of sin in themselves”: [445]

That man is rightly called a king who makes his own body an obedient subject and, by governing himself with suitable rigor, refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul, for he exercises a kind of royal power over himself. and because he knows how to rule his own person as king, so too does he sit as its judge. He will not let himself be imprisoned by sin, or thrown headlong into wickedness. [446]

909 “Moreover, by uniting their forces let the laity so remedy the institutions and conditions of the world when the latter are an inducement to sin, that these may be conformed to the norms of justice, favoring rather than hindering the practice of virtue. By so doing they will impregnate culture and human works with a moral value.” [447]

910 “The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them.” [448]

911 In the Church, “lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power [of governance] in accord with the norm of law.” [449] and so the Church provides for their presence at particular councils, diocesan synods, pastoral councils; the exercise in solidum of the pastoral care of a parish, collaboration in finance committees, and participation in ecclesiastical tribunals, etc. [450]

912 The faithful should “distinguish carefully between the rights and the duties which they have as belonging to the Church and those which fall to them as members of the human society. They will strive to unite the two harmoniously, remembering that in every temporal affair they are to be guided by a Christian conscience, since no human activity, even of the temporal order, can be withdrawn from God's dominion.” [451]

913 “Thus, every person, through these gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself 'according to the measure of Christ's bestowal.’” [452]

III. THE CONSECRATED LIFE

914 “The state of life which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, while not entering into the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs undeniably to her life and holiness.” [453]

Evangelical counsels, consecrated life

915 Christ proposes the evangelical counsels, in their great variety, to every disciple. the perfection of charity, to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. It is the profession of these counsels, within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God. [454]

916 The religious state is thus one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God. [455] In the consecrated life, Christ's faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come. [456]

One great tree, with many branches

917 “From the God-given seed of the counsels a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of the religious life lived in solitude or in community. Different religious families have come into existence in which spiritual resources are multiplied for the progress in holiness of their members and for the good of the entire Body of Christ.” [457]

918 From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical

counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. [\[458\]](#)

919 Bishops will always strive to discern new gifts of consecrated life granted to the Church by the Holy Spirit; the approval of new forms of consecrated life is reserved to the Apostolic See. [\[459\]](#)

The eremitic life

920 Without always professing the three evangelical counsels publicly, hermits “devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance.” [\[460\]](#)

921 They manifest to everyone the interior aspect of the mystery of the Church, that is, personal intimacy with Christ. Hidden from the eyes of men, the life of the hermit is a silent preaching of the Lord, to whom he has surrendered his life simply because he is everything to him. Here is a particular call to find in the desert, in the thick of spiritual battle, the glory of the Crucified One.

Consecrated virgins

922 From apostolic times Christian virgins, called by the Lord to cling only to him with greater freedom of heart, body, and spirit, have decided with the Church's approval to live in a state of virginity “for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.” [\[461\]](#)

923 “Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church.” [\[462\]](#) By this solemn rite (Consecratio virginum), the virgin is “constituted . . . a sacred person, a transcendent sign of the Church's love for Christ, and an eschatological image of this heavenly Bride of Christ and of the life to come.” [\[463\]](#)

924 “As with other forms of consecrated life,” the order of virgins establishes the woman living in the world (or the nun) in prayer, penance, service of her brethren, and apostolic activity, according to the state of life and spiritual gifts given to her. [\[464\]](#) Consecrated virgins can form themselves into associations to observe their commitment more faithfully. [\[465\]](#)

Religious life

925 Religious life was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutes canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church. [\[466\]](#)

926 Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful called by God to profess the counsels.

Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior's bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time.

927 All religious, whether exempt or not, take their place among the collaborators of the diocesan bishop in his pastoral duty. [467] From the outset of the work of evangelization, the missionary “planting” and expansion of the Church require the presence of the religious life in all its forms. [468] “History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by religious families in the propagation of the faith and in the formation of new Churches: from the ancient monastic institutions to the medieval orders, all the way to the more recent congregations.” [469]

Secular institutes

928 “A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within.” [470]

929 By a “life perfectly and entirely consecrated to [such] sanctification,” the members of these institutes share in the Church's task of evangelization, “in the world and from within the world,” where their presence acts as “leaven in the world.” [471] “Their witness of a Christian life” aims “to order temporal things according to God and inform the world with the power of the gospel.” They commit themselves to the evangelical counsels by sacred bonds and observe among themselves the communion and fellowship appropriate to their “particular secular way of life.” [472]

Societies of apostolic life

930 Alongside the different forms of consecrated life are “societies of apostolic life whose members without religious vows pursue the particular apostolic purpose of their society, and lead a life as brothers or sisters in common according to a particular manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these there are societies in which the members embrace the evangelical counsels” according to their constitutions. [473]

Consecration and mission: proclaiming the King who is coming

931 Already dedicated to him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the Church. By this state of life consecrated to God, the Church manifests Christ and shows us how the Holy Spirit acts so wonderfully in her. and so the first mission of those who profess the evangelical counsels is to live out their consecration. Moreover, “since members of institutes of consecrated life dedicate themselves through their consecration to the service of the Church they are obliged in a special manner to engage in missionary work, in accord with the character of the institute.” [474]

932 In the Church, which is like the sacrament - the sign and instrument - of God's own life, the consecrated life is seen as a special sign of the mystery of redemption. To follow and imitate

Christ more nearly and to manifest more clearly his self-emptying is to be more deeply present to one's contemporaries, in the heart of Christ. For those who are on this "narrower" path encourage their brethren by their example, and bear striking witness "that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes." [475]

933 Whether their witness is public, as in the religious state, or less public, or even secret, Christ's coming remains for all those consecrated both the origin and rising sun of their life:

For the People of God has here no lasting city, . . . [and this state] reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life which we have acquired through the redemptive work of Christ and prelude to our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom. [476]

IN BRIEF

934 "Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers, who are also called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful who are also called laity." In both groups there are those Christian faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels, are consecrated to God and so serve the Church's saving mission (cf. CIC, can. 207 # 1, 2).

935 To proclaim the faith and to plant his reign, Christ sends his apostles and their successors. He gives them a share in his own mission. From him they receive the power to act in his person.

936 The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him. the bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is "head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth" (CIC, can. 331).

937 The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CD 2).

938 The Bishops, established by the Holy Spirit, succeed the apostles. They are "the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches" (LG 23).

939 Helped by the priests, their co-workers, and by the deacons, the bishops have the duty of authentically teaching the faith, celebrating divine worship, above all the Eucharist, and guiding their Churches as true pastors. Their responsibility also includes concern for all the Churches, with and under the Pope.

940 "The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, lay people are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world" (AA 2 # 2).

941 Lay people share in Christ's priesthood: ever more united with him, they exhibit the grace of Baptism and Confirmation in all dimensions of their personal family, social and ecclesial lives, and so fulfill the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized.

942 By virtue of their prophetic mission, lay people “are called . . . to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind” (GS 43 # 4).

943 By virtue of their kingly mission, lay people have the power to uproot the rule of sin within themselves and in the world, by their self-denial and holiness of life (cf. LG 36).

944 The life consecrated to God is characterized by the public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in a stable state of life recognized by the Church.

945 Already destined for him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the whole Church.

[385](#) CIC, Can. 204 para 1; Cf. LG 31.

[386](#) CIC, Can. 208; Cf. LG 32.

[387](#) AA 2.

[388](#) CIC, Can. 207 # 2.

[389](#) LG 18.

[390](#) Rom 10:14:15.

[391](#) Rom 10:17.

[392](#) Cf. Rom 1:1.

[393](#) Phil 2:7.

[394](#) Cf. 1 Cor 9:19.

[395](#) AG 5.

[396](#) Cf. Jn 17:21-23.

[397](#) Jn 21:22; Cf. Mt 4:19. 21; Jn 1:4[ETML:C/].

[398](#) LG 19; cf. Lk 6:13; Jn 21:15-17.

[399](#) LG 22; cf. CIC, can. 330.

[400](#) Cf. Mt 16:18-19; Jn 21:15-17.

[401](#) LG 22 # 2.

[402](#) LG 23.

[403](#) LG 22; cf. CD 2,9.

[404](#) LG 22; cf. CIC, can 336.

[405](#) CIC, can. 337 # 1.

[406](#) LG 22.

[407](#) LG 22.

[408](#) LG 23.

[409](#) LG 23.

[410](#) Cf. CD 3.

[411](#) LG 23.

[412](#) Cf. Gal 2:10.

[413](#) Cf. Apostolic Constitutions 34.

[414](#) LG 23 # 3.

[415](#) PO 4; cf. Mk 16:15.

[416](#) LG 25.

[417](#) LG 12; cf. DV 10.
[418](#) LG 25; cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3074.
[419](#) DV 10 # 2.
[420](#) LG 25 # 2.
[421](#) Cf. LG 25.
[422](#) LG 25.
[423](#) LG 26.
[424](#) 1 Pet 5:3.
[425](#) LG 26 # 3.
[426](#) LG 27; cf. Lk 22:26-27.
[427](#) LG 27.
[428](#) LG 27 # 2.
[429](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Smyrn. 8, 1: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 309.
[430](#) LG 31.
[431](#) LG 31 # 2.
[432](#) Pius XII, Discourse, February 20, 1946: AAS 38 (1946) 149; quoted by John Paul II, CL 9.
[433](#) Cf. LG 33.
[434](#) LG 34; cf. LG 10, 1 Pet 2:5.
[435](#) CIC, can. 835 # 4.
[436](#) Cf. CIC, can. 230 # 1.
[437](#) CIC, can. 230 # 3.
[438](#) LG 35.
[439](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh. III, 71, 4 ad 3.
[440](#) LG 35 # 1, # 2.
[441](#) AA 6 # 3; cf. AG 15.
[442](#) Cf. CIC, cann. 229; 774; 776; 780; 823 # 1.
[443](#) CIC, can. 212 # 3.
[444](#) Cf. Phil 2:8-9.
[445](#) LG 36.
[446](#) St. Ambrose, Psal 118:14:30: PL 15:1476.
[447](#) LG 36 # 3.
[448](#) Paul VI, EN 73.
[449](#) CIC, can. 129 # 2.
[450](#) Cf. CIC, cann. 443 # 4; 463 ## 1 and 2; 492 # 1; 511; 517 # 2; 536; 1421 # 2.
[451](#) LG 36 # 4.
[452](#) LG 33 # 2; cf. Eph 4:7.
[453](#) LG 44 # 4.
[454](#) Cf. LG 42-43; PC 1.
[455](#) Cf. PC 5.
[456](#) Cf. CIC, can. 573.
[457](#) LG 43.
[458](#) PC 1.
[459](#) Cf. CIC, can. 605.
[460](#) CIC, can. 603 # 1.
[461](#) Mt 19:12; cf. 1 Cor 7:34-36.

[462](#) CIC, can. 604 # 1.
[463](#) Ordo Consecrationis Virginum, Praenotanda 1.
[464](#) Cf. CIC, can. 604 # 1; OCV Praenotanda 2.
[465](#) Cf. CIC, can. 604 # 2.
[466](#) Cf. CIC, cann. 607; 573; UR 15.
[467](#) Cf. CD 33-35; CIC, can. 591.
[468](#) Cf. AG 18; 40.
[469](#) John Paul II, RMiss 69.
[470](#) CIC, can. 710.
[471](#) Pius XII, Provida Mater; cf. PC 11.
[472](#) Cf. CIC, can. 713 # 2.
[473](#) Cf. CIC, can. 731 ## 1 and 2.
[474](#) CIC, can. 783.; cf. RM 69
[475](#) LG 31 # 2.
[476](#) LG 44 # 3.

Paragraph 5. THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

946 After confessing “the holy catholic Church,” the Apostles' Creed adds “the communion of saints.” In a certain sense this article is a further explanation of the preceding: “What is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints?” [\[477\]](#) The communion of saints is the Church.

947 “Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others.... We must therefore believe that there exists a communion of goods in the Church. But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head.... Therefore, the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments.” [\[478\]](#) “As this Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods she has received necessarily become a common fund.” [\[479\]](#)

948 The term “communion of saints” therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion in holy things (sancta)” and “among holy persons (sancti).

“Sancta sancti's! (“God's holy gifts for God's holy people”) is proclaimed by the celebrant in most Eastern liturgies during the elevation of the holy Gifts before the distribution of communion. the faithful (sancta) are fed by Christ's holy body and blood (sancta) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (koinonia) and to communicate it to the world.

I. COMMUNION IN SPIRITUAL GOODS

949 In the primitive community of Jerusalem, the disciples “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.” [\[480\]](#) Communion in the faith. the faith of the faithful is the faith of the Church, received from the apostles. Faith is a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared.

950 Communion of the sacraments. “The fruit of all the sacraments belongs to all the faithful. All the sacraments are sacred links uniting the faithful with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ, and above all Baptism, the gate by which we enter into the Church. the communion of saints must be understood as the communion of the sacraments.... the name 'communion' can be applied to all of them, for they unite us to God.... But this name is better suited to the Eucharist than to any other, because it is primarily the Eucharist that brings this communion about.” [481]

951 Communion of charisms. Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit “distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank” for the building up of the Church. [482] Now, “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” [483]

952 “They had everything in common.” [484] “Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy . . . and of their neighbors in want.” [485] A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods. [486]

953 Communion in charity. In the sanctorum communio, “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.” [487] “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” [488] “Charity does not insist on its own way.” [489] In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.

II. THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

954 The three states of the Church. “When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is”’: [490]

All of us, however, in varying degrees and in different ways share in the same charity towards God and our neighbours, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to our God. All, indeed, who are of Christ and who have his Spirit form one Church and in Christ cleave together. [491]

955 “So it is that the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who sleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, this union is reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.” [492]

956 The intercession of the saints. “Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness.... They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus.... So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.” [493]

Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life. [494]

I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth. [495]

957 Communion with the saints. “It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself” [496]:

We worship Christ as God's Son; we love the martyrs as the Lord's disciples and imitators, and rightly so because of their matchless devotion towards their king and master. May we also be their companions and fellow disciples! [497]

958 Communion with the dead. “In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them.” [498] Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

959 In the one family of God. “For if we continue to love one another and to join in praising the Most Holy Trinity - all of us who are sons of God and form one family in Christ - we will be faithful to the deepest vocation of the Church.” [499]

IN BRIEF

960 The Church is a “communion of saints”: this expression refers first to the “holy things” (sancta), above all the Eucharist, by which “the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about” (LG 3).

961 The term “communion of saints” refers also to the communion of “holy persons” (sancti) in Christ who “died for all,” so that what each one does or suffers in and for Christ bears fruit for all.

962 “We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers” (Paul VI, CPG # 30).

[477](#) Nicetas, Expl. Symb., 10: PL 52:871B.
[478](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, Symb., 10.
[479](#) Roman Catechism I, 10, 24.
[480](#) Acts 2:42.
[481](#) Roman Catechism 1, 10, 24.
[482](#) LG 12 # 2.
[483](#) 1 Cor 12:7.
[484](#) Acts 4:32.
[485](#) Roman Catechism 1, 10, 27.
[486](#) Cf. Lk 16:1, 3.
[487](#) Rom 14:7.
[488](#) 1 Cor 12:26-27.
[489](#) 1 Cor 13:5; cf. 10:24.
[490](#) LG 49; cf. Mt 25:31; 1 Cor 15:26-27; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1305.
[491](#) LG 49; cf. Eph 4:16.
[492](#) LG 49.
[493](#) LG 49; cf. 1 Tim 2:5.
[494](#) St. Dominic, dying, to his brothers.
[495](#) St. Therese of Lisieux, the Final Conversations, tr. John Clarke (Washington: ICS, 1977), 102.
[496](#) LG 50; cf. Eph 4:1-6.
[497](#) Martyrium Polycarpi, 17: Apostolic Fathers II/3, 396.
[498](#) LG 50; cf. 2 Macc 12:45.
[499](#) LG 51; d. Heb 3:6.

Paragraph 6. MARY - MOTHER OF CHRIST, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

963 Since the Virgin Mary's role in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit has been treated, it is fitting now to consider her place in the mystery of the Church. "The Virgin Mary . . . is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... She is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ' ... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head." [\[500\]](#) "Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church." [\[501\]](#)

I. MARY'S MOTHERHOOD WITH REGARD TO THE CHURCH

Wholly united with her Son . . .

964 Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death"; [\[502\]](#) it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion:

Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring

with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her: to be given, by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: "Woman, behold your son." [503]

965 After her Son's Ascension, Mary "aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers." [504] In her association with the apostles and several women, "we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation." [505]

. . . also in her Assumption

966 "Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death." [506] The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death. [507]

. . . she is our Mother in the order of grace

967 By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Thus she is a "preeminent and . . . wholly unique member of the Church"; indeed, she is the "exemplary realization" (typus) [508] of the Church.

968 Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. "In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace." [509]

969 "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix." [510]

970 "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it." [511] "No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various

ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.” [512]

II. DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

971 “All generations will call me blessed”: “The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.” [513] The Church rightly honors “the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs.... This very special devotion ... differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and greatly fosters this adoration.” [514] The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an “epitome of the whole Gospel,” express this devotion to the Virgin Mary. [515]

III. MARY - ESCHATOLOGICAL ICON OF THE CHURCH

972 After speaking of the Church, her origin, mission, and destiny, we can find no better way to conclude than by looking to Mary. In her we contemplate what the Church already is in her mystery on her own “pilgrimage of faith,” and what she will be in the homeland at the end of her journey. There, “in the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity,” “in the communion of all the saints,” [516] The Church is awaited by the one she venerates as Mother of her Lord and as her own mother.

In the meantime the Mother of Jesus, in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God. [517]

IN BRIEF

973 By pronouncing her “fiat” at the Annunciation and giving her consent to the Incarnation, Mary was already collaborating with the whole work her Son was to accomplish. She is mother wherever he is Savior and head of the Mystical Body.

974 The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body.

975 “We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ” (Paul VI, CPG # 15).

[500] LG 53; cf. St. Augustine, De virg. 6: PL 40,399.

[501] Paul VI, Discourse, November 21,1964.

[502](#) LG 57.
[503](#) LG 58; cf. Jn 19:26-27.
[504](#) LG 69.
[505](#) LG 59.
[506](#) LG 59; cf. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950): DS 3903; cf. Rev 19:16.
[507](#) Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion, Feast of the Dormition, August 15th.
[508](#) LG 53; 63.
[509](#) LG 61.
[510](#) LG 62.
[511](#) LG 60.
[512](#) LG 62.
[513](#) Lk 1:48; Paul VI, MC 56.
[514](#) LG 66.
[515](#) Cf. Paul VI, MC 42; SC 103.
[516](#) LG 69.
[517](#) LG 68; Cf. 2 Pet 3 10.

Article 10

“I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

976 The Apostle's Creed associates faith in the forgiveness of sins not only with faith in the Holy Spirit, but also with faith in the Church and in the communion of saints. It was when he gave the Holy Spirit to his apostles that the risen Christ conferred on them his own divine power to forgive sins: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” [[518](#)]

(Part Two of the catechism will deal explicitly with the forgiveness of sins through Baptism, the sacrament of Penance, and the other sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Here it will suffice to suggest some basic facts briefly.)

[518](#) Jn 20:22-23.

I. One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins

977 Our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” [[519](#)] Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that “we too might walk in newness of life.” [[520](#)]

978 “When we made our first profession of faith while receiving the holy Baptism that cleansed us, the forgiveness we received then was so full and complete that there remained in us absolutely nothing left to efface, neither original sin nor offenses committed by our own will, nor

was there left any penalty to suffer in order to expiate them.... Yet the grace of Baptism delivers no one from all the weakness of nature. On the contrary, we must still combat the movements of concupiscence that never cease leading us into evil “ [521]

979 In this battle against our inclination towards evil, who could be brave and watchful enough to escape every wound of sin? “If the Church has the power to forgive sins, then Baptism cannot be her only means of using the keys of the Kingdom of heaven received from Jesus Christ. the Church must be able to forgive all penitents their offenses, even if they should sin until the last moment of their lives.” [522]

980 It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church:

Penance has rightly been called by the holy Fathers “a laborious kind of baptism.” This sacrament of Penance is necessary for salvation for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn. [523]

[519](#) Mk 16:15-16.

[520](#) Rom 6:4; Cf. 4:25.

[521](#) Roman Catechism I, 11,3.

[522](#) Roman Catechism I, 11,4.

[523](#) Council of Trent (1551): DS 1672; Cf. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 39,17: PG 36,356.

II. The Power of the Keys

981 After his Resurrection, Christ sent his apostles “so that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations.” [524] The apostles and their successors carry out this “ministry of reconciliation,” not only by announcing to men God's forgiveness merited for us by Christ, and calling them to conversion and faith; but also by communicating to them the forgiveness of sins in Baptism, and reconciling them with God and with the Church through the power of the keys, received from Christ: [525]

[The Church] has received the keys of the Kingdom of heaven so that, in her, sins may be forgiven through Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit's action. In this Church, the soul dead through sin comes back to life in order to live with Christ, whose grace has saved us. [526]

982 There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. “There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. [527] Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin. [528]

983 Catechesis strives to awaken and nourish in the faithful faith in the incomparable greatness of the risen Christ's gift to his Church: the mission and the power to forgive sins through the ministry of the apostles and their successors:

The Lord wills that his disciples possess a tremendous power: that his lowly servants accomplish in his name all that he did when he was on earth. [529] Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels ... God above confirms what priests do here below. [530] Were there no forgiveness of sins in the Church, there would be no hope of life to come or eternal liberation. Let us thank God who has given his Church such a gift. [531]

984 The Creed links “the forgiveness of sins” with its profession of faith in the Holy Spirit, for the risen Christ entrusted to the apostles the power to forgive sins when he gave them the Holy Spirit.

985 Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sins: it unites us to Christ, who died and rose, and gives us the Holy Spirit.

986 By Christ's will, the Church possesses the power to forgive the sins of the baptized and exercises it through bishops and priests normally in the sacrament of Penance.

987 “In the forgiveness of sins, both priests and sacraments are instruments which our Lord Jesus Christ, the only author and liberal giver of salvation, wills to use in order to efface our sins and give us the grace of justification” (Roman Catechism, I, 11, 6).

[524](#) Lk 24:47.

[525](#) 2 Cor 5:18.

[526](#) St. Augustine, Sermo 214, 11: PL 38, 1071-1072.

[527](#) Roman Catechism I, 11, 5.

[528](#) Cf. Mt 18:21-22.

[529](#) Cf. St. Ambrose, De poenit. I, 15: PL 16, 490.

[530](#) John Chrysostom, De sac. 3, 5: PG 48, 643.

[531](#) St. Augustine, Sermo 213, 8: PL 38,1064.

Article 11

“I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY”

988 The Christian Creed - the profession of our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in God's creative, saving, and sanctifying action - culminates in the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead on the last day and in life everlasting.

989 We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day. [532] Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you. [533]

990 The term “flesh” refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality. [534] The “resurrection of the flesh” (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our “mortal body” will come to life again. [535]

991 Belief in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. “The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live.” [536] How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. [537]

[532] Cf. Jn 6:39-40.

[533] Rom 8:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11.

[534] Cf. Gen 6:3; Ps 56:5; Isa 40:6.

[535] Rom 8:11.

[536] Tertullian, De res, 1,1: PL 2, 841.

[537] 1 Cor 15:12-14.

I. Christ's Resurrection and Ours

The progressive revelation of the Resurrection

992 God revealed the resurrection of the dead to his people progressively. Hope in the bodily resurrection of the dead established itself as a consequence intrinsic to faith in God as creator of the whole man, soul and body. the creator of heaven and earth is also the one who faithfully maintains his covenant with Abraham and his posterity. It was in this double perspective that faith in the resurrection came to be expressed. In their trials, the Maccabean martyrs confessed:

The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws. [538] One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him. [539]

993 The Pharisees and many of the Lord's contemporaries hoped for the resurrection. Jesus teaches it firmly. To the Sadducees who deny it he answers, “Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?” [540] Faith in the resurrection rests on faith in God who “is not God of the dead, but of the living.” [541]

994 But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: “I am the Resurrection and the life.” [542] It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who

have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood. [543] Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, [544] announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the “sign of Jonah,” [545] The sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day. [546]

995 To be a witness to Christ is to be a “witness to his Resurrection,” to “[have eaten and drunk] with him after he rose from the dead.” [547] Encounters with the risen Christ characterize the Christian hope of resurrection. We shall rise like Christ, with him, and through him.

996 From the beginning, Christian faith in the resurrection has met with incomprehension and opposition. [548] “On no point does the Christian faith encounter more opposition than on the resurrection of the body.” [549] It is very commonly accepted that the life of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death. But how can we believe that this body, so clearly mortal, could rise to everlasting life?

How do the dead rise?

997 What is “rising”? In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection.

998 Who will rise? All the dead will rise, “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” [550]

999 How? Christ is raised with his own body: “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself”; [551] but he did not return to an earthly life. So, in him, “all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear,” but Christ “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body,” into a “spiritual body”: [552]

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. and what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernelWhat is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.... the dead will be raised imperishable.... For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. [553]

1000 This “how” exceeds our imagination and understanding; it is accessible only to faith. Yet our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies:

Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing has been invoked upon it, is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection. [554]

1001 When? Definitely “at the last day,” “at the end of the world.” [555] Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's Parousia:

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. and the dead in Christ will rise first. [556]

Risen with Christ

1002 Christ will raise us up “on the last day”; but it is also true that, in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ. For, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is already now on earth a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ:

And you were buried with him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [557]

1003 United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains “hidden with Christ in God.” [558] The Father has already “raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” [559] Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we “also will appear with him in glory.” [560]

1004 In expectation of that day, the believer's body and soul already participate in the dignity of belonging to Christ. This dignity entails the demand that he should treat with respect his own body, but also the body of every other person, especially the suffering:

The body [is meant] for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. and God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? You are not your own; So glorify God in your body. [561]

[538](#) 2 Macc 7:9.

[539](#) 2 Macc 7:14; cf. 7:29; Dan 12:1-13.

[540](#) Mk 12:24; cf. In 11:24; Acts 23:6.

[541](#) Mk 12:27.

[542](#) Jn 11:25.

[543](#) Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40, 54.

[544](#) Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11.

[545](#) Mt 12:39.

[546](#) Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22.

[547](#) Acts 1:22; 10:41; cf. 4:33.

[548](#) Cf. Acts 17:32; 12Cor 15:12-13.

[549](#) St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 88, 5; PL 37, 1134.

[550](#) Jn 5:29; cf. Dan 12:2.

[551](#) Lk 24:39.

[552](#) Lateran Council IV (1215): DS 801; Phil 3:21; 2 Cor 15:44.

[553](#) 1 Cor 15:35-37, 42, 52, 53.

[554](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 4, 18, 4-5: PG 7/1, 1028-1029.

[555](#) Jn 6: 39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; LG 48 # 3.

[556](#) 1 Thess 4:16.

[557](#) Col 2:12; 3:1.

[558](#) Col 3:3; cf. Phil 3:20.

[559](#) Eph 2:6.

[560](#) Col 3:4.

[561](#) 1 Cor 6:13-15, 19-20.

II. Dying in Christ Jesus

1005 To rise with Christ, we must die with Christ: we must “be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” [\[562\]](#) In that “departure” which is death the soul is separated from the body.

[\[563\]](#) It will be reunited with the body on the day of resurrection of the dead. [\[564\]](#)

Death

1006 “It is in regard to death that man's condition is most shrouded in doubt.” [\[565\]](#) In a sense bodily death is natural, but for faith it is in fact “the wages of sin.” [\[566\]](#) For those who die in Christ's grace it is a participation in the death of the Lord, so that they can also share his Resurrection. [\[567\]](#)

1007 Death is the end of earthly life. Our lives are measured by time, in the course of which we change, grow old and, as with all living beings on earth, death seems like the normal end of life. That aspect of death lends urgency to our lives: remembering our mortality helps us realize that we have only a limited time in which to bring our lives to fulfillment:

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, . . . before the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. [\[568\]](#)

1008 Death is a consequence of sin. the Church's Magisterium, as authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin. [\[569\]](#) Even though man's nature is mortal God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin. [\[570\]](#) “Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned” is thus “the last enemy” of man left to be conquered. [\[571\]](#)

1009 Death is transformed by Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will. [\[572\]](#) The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing. [\[573\]](#)

The meaning of Christian death

1010 Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” [574] “The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him. [575] What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through Baptism, the Christian has already “died with Christ” sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this “dying with Christ” and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act:

It is better for me to die in (eis) Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him it is I seek - who died for us. Him it is I desire - who rose for us. I am on the point of giving birth Let me receive pure light; when I shall have arrived there, then shall I be a man. [576]

1011 In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: “My desire is to depart and be with Christ. “ [577] He can transform his own death into an act of obedience and love towards the Father, after the example of Christ: [578]

My earthly desire has been crucified; . . . there is living water in me, water that murmurs and says within me: Come to the Father. [579] I want to see God and, in order to see him, I must die. [580] I am not dying; I am entering life. [581]

1012 The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church: [582]

Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven. [583]

1013 Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When “the single course of our earthly life” is completed, [584] we shall not return to other earthly lives: “It is appointed for men to die once.” [585] There is no “reincarnation” after death.

1014 The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: “From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord”; [586] to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us “at the hour of our death” in the Hail Mary; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death.

Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren't fit to face death today, it's very unlikely you will be tomorrow [587] Praised are you, my Lord, for our sister bodily Death,

from whom no living man can escape.

Woe on those who will die in mortal sin!

Blessed are they who will be found in your most holy will,
for the second death will not harm them. [\[588\]](#)

[562](#) 2 Cor 5:8.

[563](#) Cf. Phil 1:23.

[564](#) Cf. Paul VI, CPG # 28.

[565](#) GS 18.

[566](#) Rom 6:23; cf. Gen 2:17.

[567](#) Cf. Rom 6:3-9; Phil 3:10-11.

[568](#) Eccl 12:1, 7.

[569](#) Cf. Gen 2:17; 3:3; 3:19; Wis 1:13; Rom 5:12; 6:23; DS 1511.

[570](#) Cf. Wis 2:23-24.

[571](#) GS 18 # 2; cf. 1 Cor 15:26.

[572](#) Cf. Mk 14:33-34; Heb 5:7-8.

[573](#) Cf. Rom 5:19-21.

[574](#) Phil 1:21.

[575](#) 2 Tim 2:11.

[576](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Rom., 6, 1-2: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 217-220.

[577](#) Phil 1:23.

[578](#) Cf. Lk 23:46.

[579](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Rom., 6, 1- 2: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 223-224.

[580](#) St. Teresa of Avila, Life, chap. 1.

[581](#) St. Therese of Lisieux, the Last Conversations.

[582](#) Cf. I Thess 4:13-14.

[583](#) Roman Missal, Preface of Christian Death I.

[584](#) LG 48 # 3.

[585](#) Heb 9:27.

[586](#) Roman Missal, Litany of the saints.

[587](#) The Imitation of Christ, 1, 23, 1.

[588](#) St. Francis of Assisi Canticle of the Creatures.

IN BRIEF

1015 “The flesh is the hinge of salvation” (Tertullian, De res. 8, 2: PL 2, 852). We believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh.

1016 By death the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our body, transformed by reunion with our soul. Just as Christ is risen and lives for ever, so all of us will rise at the last day.

1017 “We believe in the true resurrection of this flesh that we now possess” (Council of Lyons II: DS 854). We sow a corruptible body in the tomb, but he raises up an incorruptible body, a “spiritual body” (cf 1 Cor 15:42-44).

1018 As a consequence of original sin, man must suffer “bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned” (GS # 18).

1019 Jesus, the Son of God, freely suffered death for us in complete and free submission to the will of God, his Father. By his death he has conquered death, and so opened the possibility of salvation to all men.

Article 12

“I BELIEVE IN LIFE EVERLASTING”

1020 The Christian who unites his own death to that of Jesus views it as a step towards him and an entrance into everlasting life. When the Church for the last time speaks Christ's words of pardon and absolution over the dying Christian, seals him for the last time with a strengthening anointing, and gives him Christ in viaticum as nourishment for the journey, she speaks with gentle assurance:

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world

in the name of God the almighty Father,

who created you,

in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,

who suffered for you,

in the name of the Holy Spirit,

who was poured out upon you.

Go forth, faithful Christian! May you live in peace this day,

may your home be with God in Zion,

with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,

with Joseph, and all the angels and saints.... May you return to [your Creator]

who formed you from the dust of the earth.

May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints

come to meet you as you go forth from this life.... May you see your Redeemer face to face.
[589]

[589](#) OCF, Prayer of Commendation.

I. The Particular Judgment

1021 Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. [\[590\]](#) The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. the parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul -a destiny which can be different for some and for others. [\[591\]](#)

1022 Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven-through a purification [\[592\]](#) or immediately, [\[593\]](#)-or immediate and everlasting damnation. [\[594\]](#)

At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love. [\[595\]](#)

[590](#) Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10.

[591](#) Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23.

[592](#) Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 857-858; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304- 1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820.

[593](#) Cf. Benedict XII, Benedictus Deus (1336): DS 1000-1001; John XXII, Ne super his (1334): DS 990.

[594](#) Cf. Benedict XII, Benedictus Deus (1336): DS 1002.

[595](#) St. John of the Cross, Dichos 64.

II. Heaven

1023 Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they “see him as he is,” face to face: [\[596\]](#)

By virtue of our apostolic authority, we define the following: According to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints . . . and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's holy Baptism (provided they were not in need of purification when they died, . . . or, if they then did need or will need some purification, when they have been purified after death, . . .)

already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgment - and this since the Ascension of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into heaven - have been, are and will be in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom and celestial paradise with Christ, joined to the company of the holy angels. Since the Passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and do see the divine essence with an intuitive vision, and even face to face, without the mediation of any creature. [597]

1024 This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed - is called "heaven." Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.

1025 To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." the elect live "in Christ," [598] but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name. [599]

For life is to be with Christ; where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom. [600]

1026 By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. the life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

1027 This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise: "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." [601]

1028 Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. the Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory "the beatific vision":

How great will your glory and happiness be, to be allowed to see God, to be honored with sharing the joy of salvation and eternal light with Christ your Lord and God, . . . to delight in the joy of immortality in the Kingdom of heaven with the righteous and God's friends. [602]

1029 In the glory of heaven the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him "they shall reign for ever and ever." [603]

[596](#) 1 Jn 3:2; cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4.

[597](#) Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000; cf. LG 49.

[598](#) Phil 1:23; cf. Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17.

[599](#) Cf. Rev 2:17.

[600](#) St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, 10, 121: PL 15, 1834A.

[601](#) 1 Cor 2:9.

[602](#) St. Cyprian, Ep. 58, 10, 1: CSEL 3/2, 665.

[603](#) Rev 22:5; cf. Mt 25:21, 23.

III. The Final Purification, or Purgatory

1030 All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

1031 The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. [\[604\]](#) The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. the tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: [\[605\]](#)

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. [\[606\]](#)

1032 This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." [\[607\]](#) From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. [\[608\]](#) The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them. [\[609\]](#)

[604](#) Cf. Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820; (1547): 1580; see also Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus* (1336): DS 1000.

[605](#) Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 1 Pet 1:7.

[606](#) St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* 4, 39: PL 77, 396; cf. Mt 12:31.

[607](#) 2 Macc 12:46.

[608](#) Cf. Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 856.

[609](#) St. John Chrysostom, *Hom.* in 1 Cor. 41, 5: PG 61, 361; cf. Job 1:5.

IV. Hell

1033 We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not

love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” [610] Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren. [611] To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called “hell.”

1034 Jesus often speaks of “Gehenna” of “the unquenchable fire” reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. [612] Jesus solemnly proclaims that he “will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,” [613] and that he will pronounce the condemnation: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!” [614]

1035 The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire.” [615] The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

1036 The affirmations of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are a call to the responsibility incumbent upon man to make use of his freedom in view of his eternal destiny. They are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” [616]

Since we know neither the day nor the hour, we should follow the advice of the Lord and watch constantly so that, when the single course of our earthly life is completed, we may merit to enter with him into the marriage feast and be numbered among the blessed, and not, like the wicked and slothful servants, be ordered to depart into the eternal fire, into the outer darkness where “men will weep and gnash their teeth.” [617]

1037 God predestines no one to go to hell; [618] for this, a willful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end. In the Eucharistic liturgy and in the daily prayers of her faithful, the Church implores the mercy of God, who does not want “any to perish, but all to come to repentance”: [619]

Father, accept this offering

from your whole family.

Grant us your peace in this life,

save us from final damnation,

and count us among those you have chosen. [620]

[610](#) 1 Jn 3:14-15.

[611](#) Cf. Mt 25:31-46.

[612](#) Cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48.

[613](#) Mt 13:41-42.

[614](#) Mt 25:41.

[615](#) Cf. DS 76; 409; 411; 801; 858; 1002; 1351; 1575; Paul VI, CPG # 12.

[616](#) Mt 7:13-14.

[617](#) LG 48 # 3; Mt 22:13; cf. Heb 9:27; Mt 25:13, 26, 30, 31 46.

[618](#) Cf. Council of Orange II (529): DS 397; Council of Trent (1547):1567.

[619](#) 2 Pet 3:9.

[620](#) Roman Missal, EP I (Roman Canon) 88.

V. The Last Judgment

1038 The resurrection of all the dead, “of both the just and the unjust,” [\[621\]](#) will precede the Last Judgment. This will be “the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.” [\[622\]](#) Then Christ will come “in his glory, and all the angels with him Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.... and they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” [\[623\]](#)

1039 In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare. [\[624\]](#) The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life:

All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When “our God comes, he does not keep silence.” . . . he will turn towards those at his left hand: . . . “I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father - but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence.” [\[625\]](#)

1040 The Last Judgment will come when Christ returns in glory. Only the Father knows the day and the hour; only he determines the moment of its coming. Then through his Son Jesus Christ he will pronounce the final word on all history. We shall know the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation and of the entire economy of salvation and understand the marvellous ways by which his Providence led everything towards its final end. the Last Judgment will reveal that God's justice triumphs over all the injustices committed by his creatures and that God's love is stronger than death. [\[626\]](#)

1041 The message of the Last Judgment calls men to conversion while God is still giving them “the acceptable time, . . . the day of salvation.” [627] It inspires a holy fear of God and commits them to the justice of the Kingdom of God. It proclaims the “blessed hope” of the Lord's return, when he will come “to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all who have believed.” [628]

[621](#) Acts 24:15.

[622](#) Jn 5:28-29.

[623](#) Mt 25:31, 32, 46.

[624](#) Cf. Jn 12:49.

[625](#) St. Augustine, Sermo 18, 4: PL 38, 130-131; cf. Ps 50:3.

[626](#) Cf. Song 8:6.

[627](#) 2 Cor 6:2.

[628](#) Titus 2:13; 2 Thess 1:10.

VI. Hope of the New Heaven and the New Earth

1042 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. the universe itself will be renewed:

The Church . . . will receive her perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things. At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly re-established in Christ. [629]

1043 Sacred Scripture calls this mysterious renewal, which will transform humanity and the world, “new heavens and a new earth.” [630] It will be the definitive realization of God's plan to bring under a single head “all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.” [631]

1044 In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men. [632] “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” [633]

1045 For man, this consummation will be the final realization of the unity of the human race, which God willed from creation and of which the pilgrim Church has been “in the nature of sacrament.” [634] Those who are united with Christ will form the community of the redeemed, “the holy city” of God, “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” [635] She will not be wounded any longer by sin, stains, self-love, that destroy or wound the earthly community. [636] The beatific vision, in which God opens himself in an inexhaustible way to the elect, will be the ever-flowing well-spring of happiness, peace, and mutual communion.

1046 For the cosmos, Revelation affirms the profound common destiny of the material world and man:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God . . . in hope because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay.... We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [637]

1047 The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, “so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just,” sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ. [638]

1048 “We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. the form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men.” [639]

1049 “Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society.” [640]

1050 “When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise . . . according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom.” [641] God will then be “all in all” in eternal life: [642]

True and subsistent life consists in this: the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, pouring out his heavenly gifts on all things without exception. Thanks to his mercy, we too, men that we are, have received the inalienable promise of eternal life. [643]

[629](#) LG 48; Cf. Acts 3:21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Pet 3:10-13.

[630](#) 2 Pet 3:13; Cf. Rev 21:1.

[631](#) Eph 1:10.

[632](#) Cf. Rev 21:5.

[633](#) Rev 21:4.

[634](#) Cf. LG 1.

[635](#) Rev 21:2, 9.

[636](#) Cf. Rev 21:27.

[637](#) Rom 8:19-23.

[638](#) St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 5, 32, 1 PG 7/2, 210.

[639](#) GS 39 # 1.

[640](#) GS 39 # 2.

[641](#) GS 39 # 3.

[642](#) 1 Cor 5:28.

[643](#) St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. illum. 18, 29: PG 33, 1049.

IN BRIEF

1051 Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead.

1052 “We believe that the souls of all who die in Christ's grace . . . are the People of God beyond death. On the day of resurrection, death will be definitively conquered, when these souls will be reunited with their bodies” (Paul VI, CPG # 28).

1053 “We believe that the multitude of those gathered around Jesus and Mary in Paradise forms the Church of heaven, where in eternal blessedness they see God as he is and where they are also, to various degrees, associated with the holy angels in the divine governance exercised by Christ in glory, by interceding for us and helping our weakness by their fraternal concern” (Paul VI, CPG # 29).

1054 Those who die in God's grace and friendship imperfectly purified, although they are assured of their eternal salvation, undergo a purification after death, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of God.

1055 By virtue of the “communion of saints,” the Church commends the dead to God's mercy and offers her prayers, especially the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, on their behalf.

1056 Following the example of Christ, the Church warns the faithful of the “sad and lamentable reality of eternal death” (GCD 69), also called “hell.”

1057 Hell's principal punishment consists of eternal separation from God in whom alone man can have the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

1058 The Church prays that no one should be lost: “Lord, let me never be parted from you.” If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God “desires all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4), and that for him “all things are possible” (Mt 19:26).

1059 “The holy Roman Church firmly believes and confesses that on the Day of Judgment all men will appear in their own bodies before Christ's tribunal to render an account of their own deeds” (Council of Lyons II [1274]: DS 859; cf. DS 1549).

1060 At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. Then the just will reign with Christ for ever, glorified in body and soul, and the material universe itself will be transformed. God will then be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28), in eternal life.

“Amen”

1061 The Creed, like the last book of the Bible, [644] ends with the Hebrew word amen. This word frequently concludes prayers in the New Testament. the Church likewise ends her prayers with “Amen.”

1062 In Hebrew, amen comes from the same root as the word “believe.” This root expresses solidity, trustworthiness, faithfulness. and so we can understand why “Amen” may express both God's faithfulness towards us and our trust in him.

1063 In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we find the expression “God of truth” (literally “God of the Amen”), that is, the God who is faithful to his promises: “He who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth [amen].” [645] Our Lord often used the word “Amen,” sometimes repeated, [646] to emphasize the trustworthiness of his teaching, his authority founded on God's truth.

1064 Thus the Creed's final “Amen” repeats and confirms its first words: “I believe.” To believe is to say “Amen” to God's words, promises and commandments; to entrust oneself completely to him who is the “Amen” of infinite love and perfect faithfulness. the Christian's everyday life will then be the “Amen” to the “I believe” of our baptismal profession of faith:

May your Creed be for you as a mirror. Look at yourself in it, to see if you believe everything you say you believe. and rejoice in your faith each day. [647]

1065 Jesus Christ himself is the “Amen.” [648] He is the definitive “Amen” of the Father's love for us. He takes up and completes our “Amen” to the Father: “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God”: [649]

Through him, with him, in him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
almighty Father,
God, for ever and ever.
AMEN.

[644] Cf. Rev 22:21.

[645] Isa 65:16.

[646] Cf. Mt 6:2, 5, 16; Jn 5:19.

[647] St. Augustine, Sermo 58, 11, 13: PL 38, 399.

[648] Rev 3:14.

[649] 2 Cor 1:20.