

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

A response to the Synodal Journey

This is a new initiative in response to your request to learn more about the teachings of the Catholic Church from the outcome of the Synodal Journey done recently. Each week an excerpt from the Catechism is selected along with a simple explanation. Copies are available at the back of Our Lady Star of the Sea RC Church, Ilfracombe.

If you would like to further explore the teachings of our faith there are several groups across the diocese that meet locally and online.

If you would like more information, please contact:
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It is essential that every Catholic has access to good Catechesis to be able to deepen their faith. The Diocese of Plymouth recommends the many Catechetical Workshops from 'Franciscan at Home,' for more information on access to these and online or real group sessions contact deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk Department of Evangelisation and Catechesis.

Weeks 51-71

Week 51

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 443-448

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORDS OF OUR Lord, “Adore the Lord your God and worship Him alone” (Matthew 4:10)?



These words mean to adore God as the Lord of everything that exists; to render to Him the individual and community worship which is His due; to pray to Him with sentiments of praise, of thanks and of supplication; to offer Him sacrifices, above all the spiritual sacrifice of one's own life, united with the perfect sacrifice of Christ; and to keep the promises and vows made to Him.

In what way does a person exercise his or her proper right to worship God in truth and in freedom?

Every person has the right and the moral duty to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church. Once the truth is known, each person has the right and moral duty to embrace it, to guard it faithfully and to render God authentic worship. At the same time, the dignity of the human person requires that in religious matters no one may be forced to act against conscience nor be restrained, within the just limits of public order, from acting in conformity with conscience, privately or publicly, alone or in association with others.

What does God prohibit by his command, “you shall not have other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2)?

This commandment forbids:

*Polytheism and idolatry, which divinises creatures, power, money or even demons.

*Superstition which is a departure from the worship due to the true God and which also expresses itself in various forms of divination, magic, sorcery and Spiritism.

*Irreligion which is evidenced: in tempting God by word or deed; in sacrilege, which profanes sacred persons or sacred things, above all the Eucharist; and in simony, which involves the buying or selling of spiritual things.

*Atheism which rejects the existence of God, founded often on a false conception of human autonomy.

*Agnosticism which affirms that nothing can be known about God and involves indifferentism and practical atheism.

Does the commandment of God “you shall not make for yourself a graven image” (Exodus 20:3), forbid the cult of images?

In the Old Testament this Commandment forbade any representation of God who is absolutely transcendent. The Christian veneration of sacred images, however, is justified by the incarnation of the Son of God (as taught by the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD) because such veneration is founded on the mystery of the Son of God made man, in whom the transcendent God is made visible. This does not mean the adoration of an image, but rather the veneration of the one who is represented in it: for example, Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels and the Saints.

The second commandment:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

How does one respect the holiness of the name of god?

One shows respect for the holy Name of God by blessing it, praising it and glorifying it. It is forbidden, therefore, to call on the Name of God to justify a crime. It is also wrong to use the holy Name of God in any improper way as in blasphemy (which by its nature is a grave sin), curses, and unfaithfulness to promises made in the Name of God.

Why is a false oath forbidden?

It is forbidden because one calls upon God who is Truth Itself to be the witness to a lie.



“Do not swear, whether by the Creator or by any creature, except truthfully, of necessity and with reverence.” (Saint Ignatius of Loyola)

Week 52

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 449-457

What is perjury?

Perjury is to make a promise under oath with the intention of not keeping it or to violate a promise made under oath. It is a grave sin against God who is always faithful to his promises.

The third commandment: remember to keep holy the Lord’s day

Why did God “bless the Sabbath day and declare it sacred” (Exodus 20:11)?

God did so because on the Sabbath day one remembers God’s rest on the seventh day of creation, and also the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt and the Covenant which God sealed with His people.

How did Jesus act in regard to the Sabbath?

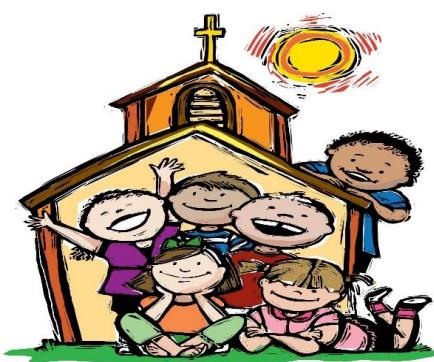
Jesus recognised the holiness of the Sabbath day and with divine authority He gave this law its authentic interpretation: “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

For what reason has the Sabbath been changed to Sunday for Christians?

The reason is because Sunday is the day of the Resurrection of Christ. As “the first day of the week” (Mark 16:2) it recalls the first creation and as the “eighth day”, which follows the Sabbath, it symbolises the new creation ushered in by the Resurrection of Christ. Thus, it has become for Christians the first of all days and of all feasts. It is the *day of the Lord* in which He with His Passover fulfilled the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and proclaimed man’s eternal rest in God.

How does one keep Sunday holy?

Christians keep Sunday and other days of obligation holy by participating in the Eucharist of the Lord and by refraining from those activities which impede the worship of God and disturb the joy proper to the day of the Lord or the necessary relaxation of mind and body. Activities are allowed on the Sabbath which are bound up with family needs or with important social service, provided that they do not lead to habits prejudicial to the holiness of Sunday, to family life and to health.



Why is the civil recognition of Sunday as a feast day important?

It is important so that all might be given the real possibility of enjoying sufficient rest and leisure to take care of their religious, familial, cultural and social lives. It is important also to have an opportune time for meditation for reflection, for silence, for study, and a time to dedicate to good works, particularly for the sick and for the elderly.

Chapter 2

“you shall love your neighbour as yourself”.

The fourth commandment: honour your father and your mother.

What does the fourth commandment require?

It commands us to honour and respect our parents and those whom God, for our own good, has vested with His authority.

What is the nature of the family in the plan of God?

A man and a woman united in marriage form a family together with their children. God instituted the family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution. Marriage and the family are ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children. Members of the same family establish among themselves personal relationships and primary responsibilities. In Christ the family becomes the *domestic church* because it is a community of faith, of hope and of charity.



WHAT PLACE DOES THE FAMILY OCCUPY IN SOCIETY?

The family is the original cell of human society and is, therefore, prior to any recognition by public authority. Family values and principles constitute the foundation of social life. Family life is an initiation into the life of society.

Week 53

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 458-465

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES THAT SOCIETY HAS TOWARDS THE FAMILY?

Society, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, has the duty to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Public authority must respect, protect and foster the true nature of marriage and the family, public morality, the rights of parents, and domestic prosperity.

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TOWARDS THEIR PARENTS?



Children owe respect, gratitude, docility and obedience to their parents.

In paying them respect and in fostering good relationship with their brothers and sisters, children contribute to the growth in harmony and holiness in family life in general.

Adult children should give their parents material and moral support whenever they find themselves in situation of distress, sickness, loneliness or old age.

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN?

Parents, in virtue of their participation in the fatherhood of God, have the first responsibility for the education of their children and they are the first heralds of the faith for them. They have the duty to love and respect their children as persons and as children of God and to provide, as far as is possible, for their physical and spiritual needs. They should select for them a suitable school and help them with prudent counsel in the choice of their profession and their state of life. In particular they have the mission of educating their children in the Christian faith.

HOW ARE PARENTS TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

Parents do this mainly by example, prayer, family catechesis and participation in the life of the Church.

ARE FAMILY BONDS AN ABSOLUTE GOOD?

Family ties are important but not absolute, because the first vocation of a Christian is to follow Jesus and to love him: “he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). Parents must support with joy their children’s choice to follow Jesus in whatever state of life, even in the consecrated life or the priestly ministry.

HOW SHOULD AUTHORITY BE EXERCISED IN THE VARIOUS SPHERES OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

Authority should always be exercised as a service, respecting fundamental human rights, a just hierarchy of values, laws, distributive justice, and the principle of subsidiarity. All those who exercise authority should seek the interests of the community before their own interest and allow their decisions to be inspired by the truth about God, about man and about the world.

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF CITIZENS IN REGARD TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES?

Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God and offer their loyal collaboration for the right functioning of public and social life. This collaboration includes love and service of one’s homeland, the right and duty to vote, payment of taxes, the defence of one’s country, and the right to exercise constructive criticism.

WHEN IS A CITIZEN FORBIDDEN TO OBEY CIVIL AUTHORITIES?

A citizen is obliged in conscience not to obey the laws of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts of the Apostles 5:29).



Week 54

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 466-472

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT KILL

WHY MUST HUMAN LIFE BE RESPECTED?

Human life must be respected because it is *sacred*. From its beginning human life involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. It is not lawful for anyone directly to destroy an innocent human being. This is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator. “Do not slay the innocent and the righteous” (Exodus 23:7).



WHY IS THE LEGITIMATE DEFENCE OF PERSONS AND OF SOCIETY NOT OPPOSED TO THIS NORM?

Because in choosing to legitimately defend oneself one is respecting the right to life (either one's own right to life or that of another) and not choosing to kill. Indeed, for someone responsible for the life of another, legitimate defence can be not only a right but a grave duty, provided only that disproportionate force is not used.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT?

A punishment imposed by legitimate public authority has the aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offence, of defending public order and people's safety, and contributing to the correction of the guilty party.

WHAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT MAY BE IMPOSED?

The punishment imposed must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence. Given the possibilities which the State now has for effectively preventing crime by rendering one who has committed an offence incapable of doing harm, the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity "are very rare, if not practically non-existent". (*Evangelium Vitae*). When non-lethal means are sufficient, authority should limit itself to such means because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good, are more in conformity with the dignity of the human person, and do not remove definitively from the guilty party the possibility of reforming himself.

WHAT IS FORBIDDEN BY THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT?

The fifth commandment forbids as gravely contrary to the moral law:

- *Direct and intentional murder* and cooperation in it;
- *Direct abortion*, willed as an end or as means, as well as cooperation in it. Attached to this sin is the penalty of excommunication because, from the moment of his or her conception, the human being must be absolutely respected and protected in his integrity;
- *Direct euthanasia* which consists in putting an end to the life of the handicapped, the sick, or those near death by an act or by the omission of a required action;
- *Suicide* and voluntary cooperation in it, insofar as it is a grave offence against the just love of God, of self, and of neighbour. One's responsibility may be aggravated by the scandal given; one who is psychologically disturbed or is experiencing grave fear may have diminished responsibility.

WHAT MEDICAL PROCEDURES ARE PERMITTED WHEN DEATH IS CONSIDERED IMMINENT?

When death is considered imminent the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted. However, it is legitimate to use pain-killers which do not aim at in death and to refuse "over-zealous treatment", that is the utilisation of disproportionate medical procedures without reasonable hope of a positive outcome.

WHY MUST SOCIETY PROTECT EVERY EMBRYO?

The inalienable right to life of every human individual from the first moment of conception is a constitutive element of civil society and its legislation. When the State does not place its power at the service of the rights of all and in particular of the more vulnerable, including unborn children, the very foundations of a State based on law are undermined.



Week 55

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 473-481

HOW DOES ONE AVOID SCANDAL

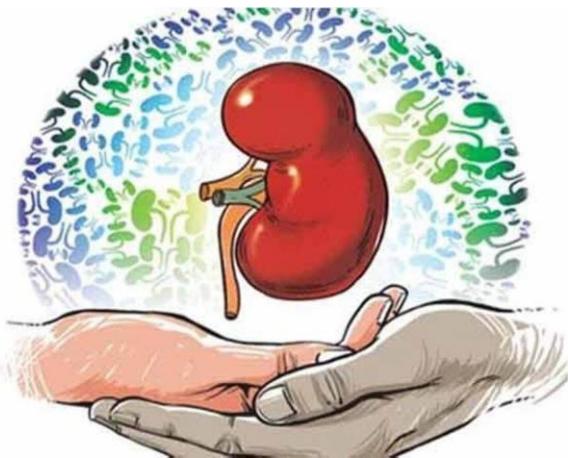
Scandal, which consists in inducing others to do evil, is avoided when we respect the soul and body of the person. Anyone who deliberately leads others to commit serious sin himself or herself commits a grave offence.

WHAT DUTY DO WE HAVE TOWARD OUR BODY?

We must take reasonable care of our own physical health and that of others but avoid the cult of the body and every kind of excess. Also to be avoided are the use of drugs which cause very serious damage to human health and life, as well as the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco and medicine.

WHEN ARE SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS ON HUMAN INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS MORALLY LEGITIMATE?

They are morally legitimate when they are at the service of the integral good of the person and of society, without disproportionate risks to the life and physical and psychological integrity of the subjects who must be properly informed and consenting.



ARE THE TRANSPLANT AND DONATION OF ORGANS ALLOWED BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH?

The transplant of organs is morally acceptable with the consent of the donor and without excessive risks to him or her. Before allowing the noble act of organ donation after death, one must verify that the donor is truly dead.

WHAT PRACTICES ARE CONTRARY TO RESPECT FOR THE BODILY INTEGRITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON?

They are: kidnapping and hostage taking, terrorism, torture, violence, and direct sterilisation. Amputations and mutilations of a person are morally permissible only for strictly therapeutic medical reasons.

WHAT CARE MUST BE GIVEN TO THE DYING?

The dying have a right to live the last moments of their earthly lives with dignity and, above all, to be sustained with prayer and the sacraments that prepare them to meet the living God.

HOW ARE THE BODIES OF THE DECEASED TO BE TREATED?

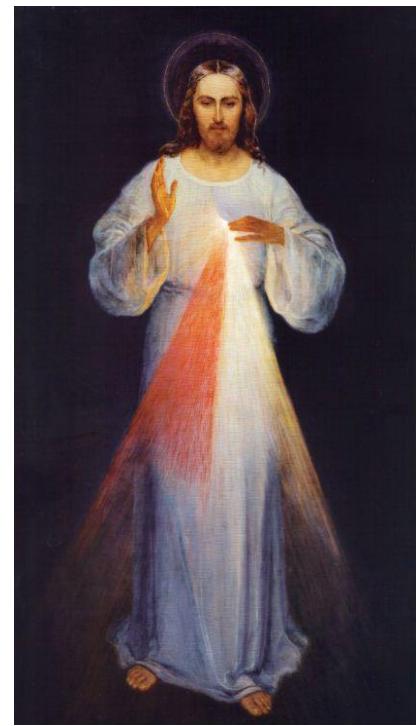
The bodies of the departed must be treated with love and respect. Their cremation is permitted provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body.

WHAT DOES THE LORD ASK OF EVERY PERSON IN REGARD TO PEACE?

The Lord proclaimed “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). He called for peace of heart and denounced the immorality of anger which is a desire for revenge for some evil suffered. He also denounced hatred which leads one to wish evil on one’s neighbour. These attitudes, if voluntary and consented to in matters of great importance, are mortal sins against charity.

WHAT IS PEACE IN THIS WORLD?

Peace in this world, which is required for the respect and development of human life, is not simply the absence of war or a balance of power between adversaries. It is “the tranquillity of order” (Saint Augustine), “the work of justice” (Isaiah 32:17) and the effect of charity. Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ.



Week 56

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 482-487

WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR EARTHLY PEACE?

Earthly peace requires the equal distribution and safeguarding of the goods of persons, free communication among human beings, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of justice and fraternity.

WHEN IS IT MORALLY PERMITTED TO USE MILITARY FORCE?

The use of military force is morally justified when the following conditions are present at the same time:

- The suffering inflicted by the aggressor must be lasting, grave and certain;
- All other peaceful means must have been shown to be ineffective;
- There are well founded prospects of success;
- The use of arms, especially given the power of modern weapons of mass destruction, must not produce evils graver than the evil to be eliminated.

IN DANGER OF WAR, WHO HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RIGOROUS EVALUATION OF THESE CONDITIONS?

This responsibility belongs to the prudential judgment of government officials who also have the right to impose on citizens the obligation of national defence. The personal right to conscientious objection makes an exception to the obligation which should then be carried out by an other form of service to the human community.

IN CASE OF WAR, WHAT DOES THE MORAL LAW REQUIRE?

Even during a war the moral law always remains valid. It requires the humane treatment of noncombatants, wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. Deliberate actions that are contrary to the law of nations, and command such actions are crimes, which blind obedience does not excuse. Acts of mass destruction must be condemned and likewise extermination of peoples or ethnic minorities, which are most grievous sin. One is morally bound to resist the orders that command such acts.



WHAT MUST BE DONE TO AVOID WAR?

Because of the evils and injustices that all war brings with it, we must do everything reasonably possible to avoid it. To this end it is particularly important to avoid: the accumulation and sale of arms which are not regulated by the legitimate authorities; all forms of economic and social injustice; ethnic and religious discrimination; envy, mistrust, pride and the spirit of revenge. Everything done to overcome these and other disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war.

The sixth commandment: YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

What responsibility do human persons have in regard to their own sexual identity? (from the Catechism of the Catholic Church)

“God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image..., God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the *vocation*, and thus the capacity and responsibility, *of love* and communion. (CCC 2331).

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his or her body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others. (CCC2332).

Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs and mutual support between the sexes are lived out. (CCC2333).

Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator’s generosity and fecundity. All human generations proceed from this union. (CCC2335).

Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins. (CCC2336).



Week 57

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 488-496

WHAT IS CHASTITY?

Chastity means the positive integration of sexuality within the person. Sexuality becomes truly human when it is integrated in a correct way into the relationship of one person to another. Chastity is a moral virtue, a gift of God, a grace, and a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY?

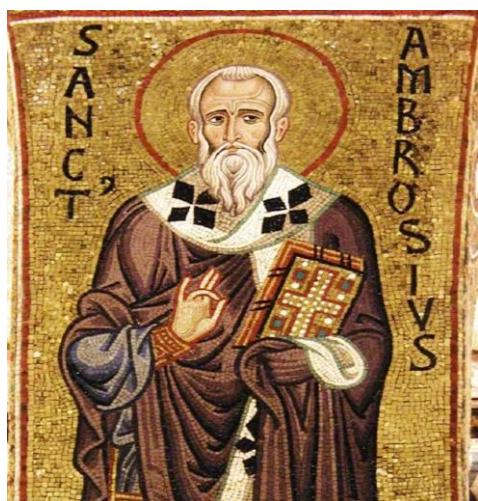
The virtue of chastity involves an apprenticeship in self-mastery as an expression of human freedom directed towards self-giving. An integral and continuing formation, which is brought about in stages, is necessary to achieve this goal.

WHAT ARE THE MEANS THAT AID THE LIVING OF CHASTITY?

There are many means at one's disposal: the grace of God, the help of the sacraments, prayer, self-knowledge, the practice of an asceticism adapted to various situations, the exercise of the moral virtues, especially the virtue of temperance which seeks to have the passions guided by reason.

IN WHAT WAY IS EVERYONE CALLED TO LIVE CHASTITY?

As followers of Christ, the model of all chastity, all the baptised are called to live chastely in keeping with their particular states of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with a n undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others, if they are married, live in conjugal chastity, or if unmarried practise chastity in continence.



“There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second is that of widows, and the third that of virgins. We do not praise any one of them to the exclusion of the others... This is what makes for the richness of the discipline of the Church.” St Ambrose.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL SINS AGAINST CHASTITY?

Grave sins against chastity differ according to their object: adultery, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape, and homosexual acts. These sins are expressions of the vice of lust. These kinds of acts committed against the physical and moral integrity of minors become even more grave.

ALTHOUGH IT SAYS ONLY “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY” WHY DOES THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT FORBID ALL SINS AGAINST CHASTITY?

It is because the Tradition of the Church comprehensively follows the moral teachings of the Old and New Testaments and considers the sixth commandment as encompassing all sins against chastity.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CIVIL AUTHORITY IN REGARD TO CHASTITY?

Insofar as it is bound to promote respect for the dignity of the person, civil authority should seek to create an environment conducive to the practice of chastity. It should also enact suitable legislation to prevent the spread of the grave offences against charity mentioned above, especially in order to protect minors and those who are the weakest members of society.

WHAT ARE THE GOODS OF CONJUGAL LOVE TO WHICH SEXUALITY IS ORDERED?

The goods of conjugal love, which for those who are baptised is sanctified by the sacrament of Matrimony, are:

- unity,
- fidelity,
- indissolubility, and
- an openness to the procreation of life.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE CONJUGAL ACT?



It has a twofold meaning: unitive (the mutual self-giving of the spouses) and procreative (an openness to the transmission of life). No one may break the inseparable connection which God has established between these two meanings of the conjugal act by excluding one or the other of them.

Week 58

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 497-507

WHEN IS IT MORAL TO REGULATE BIRTHS?

The regulation of births, which is an aspect of responsible fatherhood and motherhood, is objectively morally acceptable when it is pursued by the spouses without external pressure; when it is practiced not out of selfishness but for serious reasons; and with methods that conform to the objective criteria of morality, that is, periodic continence and use of the infertile periods.

WHAT ARE IMMORAL MEANS OF BIRTH CONTROL?

Every action – for example, direct sterilisation or contraception – is intrinsically immoral which (either in anticipation of the conjugal act, in its accomplishment or in the development of its natural consequences) proposes, as an end or as a means, to hinder procreation.

WHY ARE ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION AND ARTIFICIAL FERTILISATION IMMORAL?

They are immoral because they dissociate procreation from the act with which the spouses give themselves to each other and so introduce the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Furthermore, heterologous insemination and fertilisation with the use of techniques that involve a person other than the married couple infringe upon the right of a child to be born of a father and mother known to him, bound to each other by marriage and having the exclusive right to become parents only through each other.



HOW SHOULD CHILDREN BE CONSIDERED?

A child is a gift of God, the supreme gift of marriage. There is no such thing as a right to have children (eg. “a child at any cost”). But a child does have the right to be the fruit of the conjugal act of its parents as well as the right to be respected as a person from the moment of conception.

WHAT CAN SPOUSES DO WHEN THEY DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN?

Should the gift of a child not be given to them, after exhausting all legitimate medical options, spouses can show their generosity by way of foster care or adoption or by performing meaningful services for others. In this way they realise a precious spiritual fruitfulness.

WHAT ARE THE OFFENCES AGAINST THE DIGNITY OF MARRIAGE?

These are: adultery, divorce, polygamy, incest, so-called “free unions (cohabitation, concubinage), and sexual acts before or outside of marriage.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

What is set forth by the seventh commandment?

The seventh commandment requires respect for the universal destination and distribution of goods and the private ownership of them, as well as respect for persons, their property, and the integrity of creation. The Church also finds in this Commandment the basis for her social doctrine which involves the correct way of acting in economic, social and political life, the right and the duty of human labour, justice and solidarity among nations, and love for the poor.

Under what conditions does the right to private property exist?

The right to private property exists provided the property is acquired or received in a *just* way and that the universal destination of goods for the satisfaction of the basic needs of all takes precedence.

What is the purpose of private property?

The purpose of private property is to guarantee the freedom and dignity of individual persons by helping them to meet the basic needs of those in their charge and also of others who are in need.

What does the seventh commandment require?

The seventh commandment requires respect for the goods of others through the practice of justice and charity, temperance and solidarity. In particular it requires respect for promises made and contracts agreed to, reparation for injustice committed and restitution of stolen goods, and respect for the integrity of creation by the prudent and moderate use of the mineral, vegetable and animal resources of the universe with special attention to those species which are in danger of extinction.

What attitude should people have toward animals?

People must treat animals with kindness as creatures of God and avoid both excessive love for them and an indiscriminate use of them especially by scientific experiments that go beyond reasonable limits and entail needless suffering for the animals.

Week 59

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 508-516

What is forbidden by the seventh commandment?

Above all, the seventh commandment forbids theft, which is the taking or using of another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. This can be done also by paying unjust wages; by speculation on the value of goods in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; or by the forgery of cheques or invoices. Also forbidden is tax evasion or business fraud; wilfully damaging private or public property; usury; corruption; the private abuse of common goods; work deliberately done poorly; and waste.

What is the content of the social doctrine of the church?

The social doctrine of the Church is an organic development of the truth of the Gospel about the dignity of the human person and his social dimension offering principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and norms and guidelines for action.

When does the Church intervene in social areas?

The Church intervenes by making a moral judgment about economic and social matters when the fundamental rights of the person, the common good, or the salvation of souls requires it.

How should social and economic life be pursued?

It should be pursued according to its own proper methods within the sphere of the moral order, at the service of the whole human being and of the entire human community in keeping with social justice. Social and economic life should have the human person as its author, centre and goal.

WHAT WOULD BE OPPOSED TO THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH?

Opposed to the social doctrine of the Church are economic and social systems that sacrifice the basic rights of persons or that make profit the exclusive norm or ultimate end. For this reason the Church rejects the ideologies associated in modern times with Communism or with atheistic and totalitarian forms of socialism. But in the practice of capitalism the Church also rejects self centred individualism and an absolute primacy of the laws of the marketplace over human labour.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF WORK?

Work is both a duty and a right through which human beings collaborate with God the Creator. Indeed, by working with commitment and competence we fulfil the potential inscribed in our nature, honour the Creator's gifts and the talents received from Him, provide for ourselves and for our families, and serve the human community. Furthermore, by the grace of God, work can be a means of sanctification and collaboration with Christ for the salvation of others.



TO WHAT TYPE OF WORK DOES EVERY PERSON HAVE A RIGHT?

Access to secure and honest employment must be open to all without unjust discrimination and with respect for free economic initiative and fair compensation.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DOES THE STATE HAVE IN REGARD TO LABOUR?

It is the role of the State to guarantee individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. It is also the State's responsibility to oversee and direct the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. According to circumstances, society must help citizens to find work.

WHAT IS THE TASK OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT?

Business managers are responsible for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They must consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits, even though profits are necessary to assure investments, the future of the business, employment, and the good progress of economic life.



Photo entitled: A Church in Shanty Town by Allen Sheffield, Fine Art America.

Week 60

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 517 - 524

What are the duties of workers?

They must carry out their work in a conscientious way with competence and dedication, seeking to resolve any controversies with dialogue. Recourse to a non-violent strike is morally legitimate when it appears to be the necessary way to obtain a proportionate benefit and it takes into account the common good.

How is justice and solidarity among nations brought about?



On the international level, all nations and institutions must carry out their work in solidarity and subsidiarity for the purpose of eliminating or at least reducing poverty, the inequality of resources and economic potential, economic and social injustices, the exploitation of persons, the accumulation of debts by poor countries, and the perverse mechanisms that impede the development of the less advanced countries.

In what way do Christians participate in political and social life?

The lay faithful take part directly in political and social life by animating temporal realities with a Christian spirit and collaborating with all as authentic witnesses of the Gospel and agents of peace and justice.

What inspires love for the poor?

Love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes and by the example of Jesus in His constant concern for the poor. Jesus said, "Whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done to me" (Matthew 25:40). Love for the poor shows itself through the struggle against material poverty and also against the many forms of cultural, moral and religious poverty. The spiritual and corporal works of mercy and the many charitable institutions formed throughout the centuries are a concrete witness to the preferential love for the poor which characterises the disciples of Jesus.

The eighth commandment: you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

What is one's duty toward the truth?

Every person is called to sincerity and truthfulness in acting and speaking. Everyone has the duty to seek the truth, to adhere to it and to order one's whole life in accordance with its demands. In Jesus Christ the whole of God's truth has been made manifest. He is "the truth". Those who follow Him live in the Spirit of Truth and guard against duplicity, dissimulation and hypocrisy.

How does one bear witness to the Truth?

A Christian must bear witness to the Truth of the Gospel in every field of his activity, both public and private, and also if necessary, with the sacrifice of his very life. Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith.

What is forbidden by the eighth commandment?

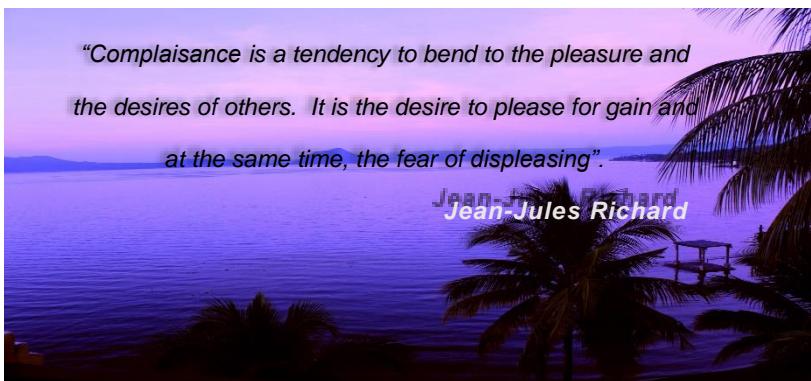
The eighth commandment forbids:

- *False witness, perjury and lying*, the gravity of which is measured by the truth it deforms, the circumstances, the intentions of the one who lies and the harm suffered by its victims;
- *Rash judgment, slander, defamation and calumny* which diminish or destroy the good reputation and honour to which every person has a right;
- *Flattery, adulation or complaisance*, especially if directed to serious sins or toward the achievement of illicit advantages.

A sin committed against truth demands reparation if it has caused harm to others.

What is required by the eighth commandment?

The eighth commandment requires respect for the truth accompanied by the discretion of charity in the field of communication and the imparting of information, where the personal and common good, the protection of privacy and the danger of scandal must all be taken into account; in respecting professional secrets which must be kept, save in exceptional cases for grave and proportionate reasons; and also in respecting confidences given under the seal of secrecy.



Week 61

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 525 - 532

How is one to use the means of social communication?

The information provided by the media must be at the service of the common good. Its content must be true and – within the limits of justice and charity – also complete. Further, information must be communicated honestly and properly with scrupulous respect for moral laws and the legitimate rights and dignity of the person.

What relationship exists between truth, beauty and sacred art?

The Truth is beautiful, carrying in itself the splendour of spiritual beauty. In addition to the expression of the Truth in words there are other complementary expressions of the Truth, most specifically in the beauty of artistic works. These are the fruit both of talents given by God and of human effort. *Sacred art* by being true and beautiful should evoke and glorify the mystery of God made visible in Christ, and lead to the adoration and love of God, the Creator and Saviour, who is the surpassing, invisible Beauty of Truth and Love.



The ninth commandment: You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

What is required by the ninth commandment?

The ninth commandment requires that one overcome carnal concupiscence in thought and in desire. The struggle against such concupiscence entails purifying the heart and practicing the virtue of temperance.

What is forbidden by the ninth commandment?

The ninth commandment forbids *cultivating* thoughts and desires connected to actions forbidden by the sixth commandment. In other words, it forbids dwelling on and entertaining such thoughts.

How does one reach purity of heart?

In the battle against disordered desires, the baptised person is able, by the grace of God, to achieve purity of heart. This is done by prayer, through the virtue and gift of chastity, through purity of intention, purity of vision (both exterior and interior), discipline of the imagination and of feelings.

What are the other requirements for purity?

Purity requires modesty which, while protecting the intimate centre of the person, expresses the sensitivity of chastity. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their communion. Purity frees one from wide-spread eroticism and avoids those things

which foster morbid curiosity. Purity also requires a purification of the social climate by means of a constant struggle against moral permissiveness which is founded on an erroneous conception of human freedom.

The tenth commandment: you shall not covet your neighbour's possessions.

What is required and what is forbidden by the tenth commandment?

This commandment, which completes the preceding commandment, requires an interior attitude of respect for the property of others and forbids *greed, unbridled covetousness* for the goods of others and *envy* which is the sadness one experiences at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself.

What does Jesus call for in poverty of spirit?

Jesus calls his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone. Detachment from riches – in the spirit of evangelical poverty – and self-abandonment to divine providence free us from anxiety about the future and prepare us for the blessedness of the “poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).



Week 62

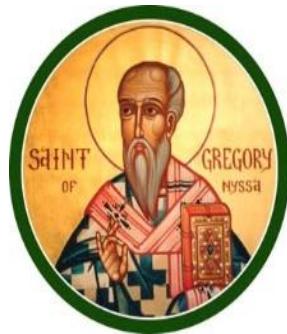
DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 533 - 540

What is the greatest human desire?

The greatest desire of the human person is to see God. “I want to see God” is the cry of our whole being. We realise our true and full happiness in the vision and beatitude of the One who created us out of love and draws us to Himself with infinite love.

“Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive”



Christian Prayer

What is prayer?

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God, or the petition of good things from Him in accord with His Will. It is always the gift of God who comes to encounter man. Christian prayer is the personal and living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is infinitely good, with His Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit who dwells in their hearts.

Why is there a universal call to prayer?

Because through creation God first calls every being from nothingness. Even after the Fall man continues to be capable of recognising his Creator and retains a desire for the One who has called him into existence. All religions, and the whole history of salvation in particular, bear witness to this human desire for God. It is God first of all, however, who ceaselessly draws every person to the mysterious encounter known as prayer.

Old Testament

How is Abraham a model of prayer?

Abraham is a model of prayer because he walked in the presence of God, heard and obeyed Him. His prayer was a battle of faith because he continued to believe in the fidelity of God even in times of trial. Besides, after having received in his own tent the visit of the Lord who confided His plan to him, Abraham dared to intercede for sinners with bold confidence.

How did Moses pray?

The prayer of Moses was typical of contemplative prayer. God, who called to Moses from the burning bush, lingered in conversation with him often and at length, “face to face, like a man with his friend” (Exodus 33:11). In this intimacy with God, Moses attained the strength to intercede tenaciously for his people: his prayer thus prefigured the intercession of the one mediator, Christ Jesus.

In the Old Testament, what relationship do the king and the temple have to prayer?

The prayer of the People of God developed in the shadow of the dwelling place of God – the Ark of the Covenant, then the Temple – under the guidance of their shepherds. Among them there was David, the King “after God’s own heart,” the shepherd who prayed for his people. His prayer was a model for the prayer of the people because it involved clinging to the divine promise and a trust filled with love for the One who is the only King and Lord.

What is the role of prayer in the mission of the prophets?



The prophets drew from prayer the light and strength to exhort the people to faith and to conversion of heart. They entered into great intimacy with God and interceded for their brothers and sisters to whom they proclaimed what they had seen and heard from the Lord. Elijah was the father of the prophets, of those who sought the face of God. On Mount Carmel he achieved the return of the people to the faith, thanks to the intervention of God to whom he prayed: “Answer me, O Lord, answer me!” (1 Kings 18:37).

What is the importance of the Psalms in prayer?

The Psalms are the summit of prayer in the Old Testament: the Word of God become the prayer of man. Inseparably both personal and communal, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, this prayer sings of God’s marvellous deeds in creation and in the history of salvation. Christ prayed the Psalms and brought them to fulfilment. Thus they remain an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church suited to people of every condition and time.

Week 63

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 541 – 549

PRAYER IS FULLY REVEALED AND REALISED IN JESUS

FROM WHOM DID JESUS LEARN HOW TO PRAY?

Jesus, with His human heart, learned how to pray from His mother and from the Jewish tradition. But His prayer sprang from a more secret source because He is the eternal Son of God who is in His Holy humanity offers His perfect filial prayer to His Father.

WHEN DID JESUS PRAY?

The Gospel often shows Jesus at prayer. We see Him draw apart to pray in solitude, even at night. He prays before the decisive moments of His mission or that of His apostles. In fact, all His life is a prayer because He is in a constant communion of love with the Father.

HOW DID JESUS PRAY DURING HIS PASSION?



The prayer of Jesus during His agony in the garden of Gethsemane and His last words on the Cross reveal the depth of His filial prayer. Jesus brings to completion the loving plan of the Father and takes upon Himself all the anguish of humanity and all the petitions and intercessions of the history of salvation. He presents them to the Father who accepts them and answers them beyond all hope by raising His Son from the dead.

HOW DOES JESUS TEACH US TO PRAY?

Jesus teaches us to pray not only with the Our Father but also when He prays. In this way He teaches us, in addition to the content, the dispositions necessary for every true prayer: purity of heart that seeks the Kingdom and forgives one's enemies, bold and filial faith that goes beyond what we feel and understand, and watchfulness that protects the disciple from temptation.

WHY IS OUR PRAYER EFFICACIOUS?

Our prayer is efficacious because it is united in faith with the prayer of Jesus. In Him Christian prayer becomes a communion of love with the Father. In this way we can present our petitions to God and be heard: "Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

HOW DID THE VIRGIN MARY PRAY?

Mary's prayer was characterised by faith and by the generous offering of the whole being to God. The Mother of Jesus is also the new Eve, the "Mother of all the living". She prays to Jesus for the needs of all people.

IS THERE A PRAYER OF MARY IN THE GOSPEL?

Along with the prayer of Mary at Cana in Galilee, the Gospel gives us the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) which is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church, the joyous thanksgiving that rises from the hearts of the poor because their hope is met by the fulfilment of the divine promises.

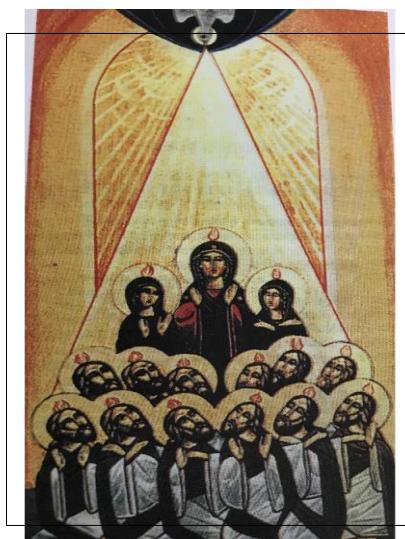
PRAYER IN THE AGE OF THE CHURCH

HOW DID THE FIRST CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN JERUSALEM PRAY?

At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles it is written that in the first community of Jerusalem, educated in the life of prayer by the Holy Spirit, the faithful "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INTERVENE IN THE CHURCH'S PRAYER?

The Holy Spirit, the interior Master of Christian prayer, forms the Church in the life of prayer and allows her to enter ever more deeply into contemplation of and union with the unfathomable mystery of Christ. The forms of prayer expressed in the apostolic and canonical writings are still the normal types of prayer for Christians today.



Coptic Icon of Pentecost

Week 64

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 550 – 558

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL FORMS OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER?



They are blessing and adoration, the prayer of petition and intercession, thanksgiving and praise. The Eucharist contains and expresses all the forms of prayer.

WHAT IS “BLESSING”?

The prayer of blessing is man’s response to God’s gifts: we bless the Almighty who first blesses us and fills us with His gifts.

HOW CAN ADORATION BE DEFINED?

Adoration is the first attitude of each individual acknowledging that he (or she) is a creature before the Creator God. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Saviour who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the “King of Glory”, respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God.

Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications (from the Catechism of the Catholic Church no 2628).

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF THE PRAYER OF PETITION?

The vocabulary of supplication in the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even “struggle in prayer” (cf Romans 15:30). St Paul calls Christian petition “groaning”. The Holy Spirit “intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” when we do not know how to pray as we ought. The prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer is asking (petitioning) for forgiveness. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and with one another. Asking for forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer (see CCC 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633).

IN WHAT DOES THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION CONSIST?

Intercession consists in asking on behalf of another. Since Abraham, it has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God’s Mercy. It conforms us and unites us to the prayer of Jesus who intercedes with the Father for all, especially sinners, even to the point of praying for those who do us harm (see Luke 23:34). The intercession of Christians recognises no boundaries: “for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions”, for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel. (see CCC 2634, 2635, 2636).

WHEN IS THANKSGIVING GIVEN TO GOD?

The Church gives thanks to God unceasingly, above all in celebrating the Eucharist in which Christ allows her to participate in His own thanksgiving to the Father. Indeed, in the work of salvation, Christ sets creation free from sin and death to consecrate it anew and make it return to the Father, for His glory. The thanksgiving of the members of the Body participates in that of their Head. For the Christian every event becomes a reason for giving thanks. “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

WHAT IS THE PRAYER OF PRAISE?

Praise is that form of prayer which recognises most immediately that God is God. It is a completely disinterested prayer: it sings God’s praise for His own sake and gives Him glory, quite beyond what He does, but simply because HE IS. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward Him who is its source and goal: the “one God”. The Eucharist contains and expresses all forms of prayer: it is “the pure offering” of the whole Body of Christ to the glory of God’s name and, according to the traditions of East and West, it is *the* “sacrifice of praise” (see CCC 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643).

THE TRADITION OF PRAYER

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITION IN REGARD TO PRAYER?

In the Church it is through living Tradition that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray. In fact, prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of an interior impulse; rather it implies contemplation, study and a grasp of the spiritual realities one experiences.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER?

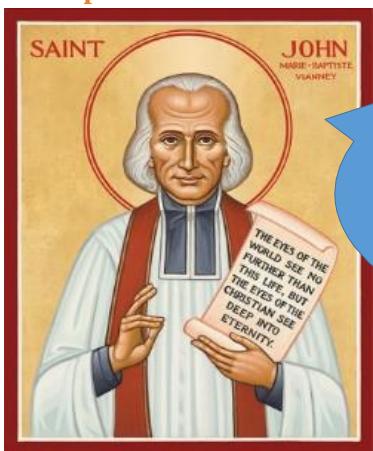
They are: The *Word of God* which gives us “the surpassing knowledge” of Christ (Philippians 3:8); the *Liturgy of the Church* that proclaims, makes present and communicates the mystery of salvation; the *theological virtues* (faith, hope and charity); and *everyday situations* because in them we can encounter God.



Week 65

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 559-567



“I love you, Lord and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally....My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.” St John Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars.

IN THE CHURCH ARE THERE DIFFERENT WAYS OF PRAYING?

In the Church there are various ways of praying that are tied to different historical, social and cultural contexts. The Magisterium of the Church has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith. It is for pastors and catechists to explain their meaning which is always related to Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE WAY OF OUR PRAYER?

The way of our prayer is Christ because prayer is directed to God our Father but reaches Him only if we pray – at least implicitly – in the name of Jesus. His humanity is in effect the only way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to our Father. Therefore liturgical prayers conclude with the formula: “through our Lord Jesus Christ”.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER?

Since the Holy Spirit is the interior Master of Christian prayer and “we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Romans 8:26), the Church exhorts us to invoke Him and implore Him on every occasion: “Come, Holy Spirit!”

HOW IS CHRISTIAN PRAYER MARIAN?

Because of her singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray to Mary and with Mary, the perfect “prayer” and to “magnify” and invoke the Lord with her. Mary in effect shows us the “Way” who is her Son, the one and only Mediator.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH PRAY TO MARY?

Above all with the *Hail Mary*, the prayer with which the Church asks the intercession of the Virgin. Other Marian prayers are the *Rosary*, the *Akathistos hymn*, the *Paraclesis*, and the hymns and canticles of diverse Christian traditions.

HOW ARE THE SAINTS GUIDES FOR PRAYER?



The saints are our models of prayer. We also ask them to intercede before the Holy Trinity for us and for the whole world. Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. In the communion of saints, throughout the history of the Church, there have developed different types of spiritualities that teach us how to live and to practice the way of prayer.

WHO CAN EDUCATE US IN PRAYER?

The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Daily family prayer is particularly recommended because it is the first witness to the life of prayer in the Church. Catechesis, prayer groups, and “spiritual direction” constitute a school of and a help to prayer.

WHAT PLACES ARE CONDUCIVE TO PRAYER?

One can pray anywhere but the choice of an appropriate place is not a matter of indifference when it comes to prayer. The church building is the proper place for liturgical prayer and Eucharistic adoration. Other places also help one to pray, such as a “prayer corner” at home, a monastery or a shrine.

WHAT TIMES ARE MORE SUITABLE FOR PRAYER?

Any time is suitable for prayer but the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer: morning and evening prayer, prayer before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the Rosary and feasts of the liturgical year.



“We must remember God more often than we draw breath” St Gregory of Nazianzus

Week 66

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 568-577

WHAT ARE THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE LIFE OF PRAYER?

Christian tradition has preserved three forms for expressing and living prayer: vocal prayer, meditation and contemplative prayer. The feature common to all of them is the recollection of the heart.

HOW CAN VOCAL PRAYER BE DESCRIBED?

Vocal prayer associates the body with the interior prayer of the body with the interior prayer of the heart. Even the most interior prayer, however, cannot dispense with vocal prayer. In any case it must always spring from a personal faith. With the *Our Father* Jesus has taught us a perfect form of vocal prayer.

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

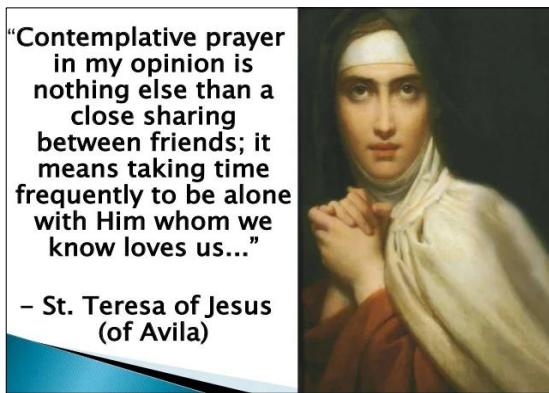
Meditation is a prayerful reflection that begins above all in the Word of God in the Bible. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion and desire in order to deepen our faith, convert our heart and fortify our will to follow Christ. It is a first step toward the union of love with our Lord.

WHAT IS CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER?

Contemplative prayer is a simple gaze upon God in silence and love. It is a gift of God, a moment of pure faith during which the one praying seeks Christ, surrenders himself to the loving will of the Father, and places his being under the action of the Holy Spirit. Saint Teresa of Avila defines contemplative prayer as the intimate sharing of friendship, "in which time is frequently taken to be alone with God who we know loves us."

"Contemplative prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him whom we know loves us..."

– St. Teresa of Jesus (of Avila)



WHY IS PRAYER A "BATTLE"?

Prayer is a gift of grace but it always presupposes a determined response on our part because those who pray "battle" against themselves, their surroundings and especially the Tempter who does all he can to turn them away from prayer. The battle of prayer is inseparable from progress in the spiritual life. We pray as we live because we live as we pray.

ARE THERE OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER?

Along with erroneous notions of prayer, many think they do not have the time to pray or that praying is useless. Those who pray can be discouraged in the face of difficulties and apparent lack of success. Humility, trust and perseverance are necessary to overcome these obstacles.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER?

Distraction is a habitual difficulty in our prayer. It takes our attention away from God and can also reveal what we are attached to. Our heart therefore must humbly turn to the Lord. Prayer is often affected by *dryness*. Overcoming this difficulty allows us to cling to the Lord in faith, even without any feeling of consolation. *Acedia* is a form of spiritual laziness due to relaxed vigilance and lack of custody of the heart.

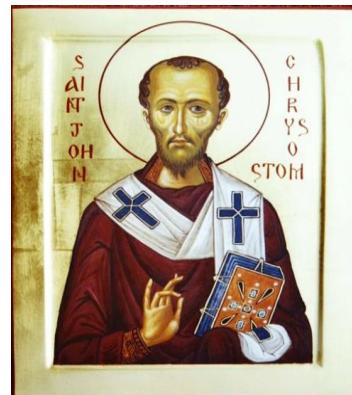
HOW MAY WE STRENGTHEN OUR FILIAL TRUST?

Filial trust is tested when we think we are not heard. We must therefore ask ourselves if we think God is truly a Father whose will we seek to fulfil, or simply a means to obtain what we want. If our prayer is united to that of Jesus, we know that He gives us much more than this or that gift. We receive the Holy Spirit who transforms our heart.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO PRAY ALWAYS?

Praying is always possible because the time of the Christian is the time of the risen Christ who remains “with us always” (Matthew 28:20). Prayer and Christian life are therefore inseparable.

“It is possible to offer frequent and fervent prayer even at the market place or strolling alone. It is possible also in your place of business, while buying or selling or even while cooking.” St John Chrysostom.



WHAT IS THE PRAYER OF THE HOUR OF JESUS?

It is called the priestly prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper. Jesus, the High Priest of the New Covenant, addresses it to His Father when the *hour* of His Sacrifice, the *hour* of His “passing over” to Him is approaching.

Week 67

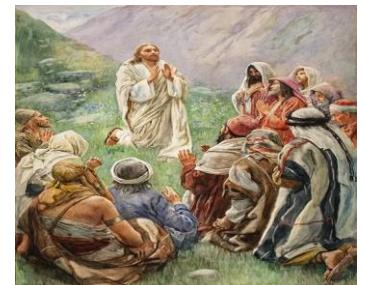
DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 578-587

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE OUR FATHER

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THE *Our Father*?

Jesus taught us this Christian prayer for which there is no substitute, the *Our Father*, on the day on which one of His disciples saw Him praying and asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). The Church’s liturgical tradition has always used the text of Saint Matthew (6:9-13).



WHAT IS THE PLACE OF THE OUR FATHER IN THE SCRIPTURES?

The Lord’s Prayer by Harold Copping

The *Our Father* is the “summary of the whole Gospel” (Tertullian), “the perfect prayer” (Saint Thomas Aquinas). Found in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it presents in the form of prayer the essential content of the Gospel.

WHY IS IT CALLED “THE LORD’S PRAYER”?

The *Our Father* is called the “*Oratio Dominica*”, that is, the Lord’s Prayer because it was taught to us by the Lord Jesus Himself.

WHAT PLACE DOES THE OUR FATHER HAVE IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH?

The *Lord’s Prayer* is the prayer of the Church *par excellence*. It is “handed on” in Baptism to signify the new birth of the children of God into the divine life. The full meaning of the *Our Father* is revealed in the Eucharist since its petitions are based on the mystery of salvation already accomplished petitions that will be fully heard at the coming of the Lord. The *Our Father* is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Hours.

WHY CAN WE DARE TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN FULL CONFIDENCE?

Because Jesus, our Redeemer, brings us into the Father’s presence and His Spirit makes us His children. We are thus able to pray the Our Father with simple and filial trust, with joyful assurance and humble boldness, with the certainty of being loved and heard.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO ADDRESS GOD AS “FATHER”?

We can invoke the “Father” because the Son of God made man has revealed Him to us and because His Spirit makes Him known to us. The invocation, Father, lets us enter into His mystery with an ever new sense of wonder and awakens in us the desire to act as His children. When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are therefore aware of our being sons of the Father in the Son.

WHY DO WE SAY “OUR” FATHER?

“Our” expresses a totally new relationship with God. When we pray to the Father, we adore and glorify Him with the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Christ we are “His” people and He is “our” God now and for eternity. In fact, we also say, “our” Father because the Church of Christ is the communion of a multitude of brothers and sisters who have but “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

WITH WHAT SPIRIT OF COMMUNION AND MISSION DO WE PRAY TO GOD AS “OUR” FATHER?

Since praying to “our” Father is a common blessing for the baptised, we feel an urgent summon to join in Jesus’ prayer for the unity of His disciples. To pray the “Our Father” is to pray with all people and for all people that they may know the one true God and be gathered into unity.

WHAT DOES THE PHRASE “WHO ART IN HEAVEN” MEAN?

This Biblical expression does not indicate a place but a way of being: God transcends everything. The expression refers to the majesty, the holiness of God, and also to His presence in the hearts of the just. Heaven, or the Father’s house, constitutes our true homeland toward which we are moving in hope while we are still on earth. “Hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), we live already in this homeland.

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE LORD’S PRAYER?

It contains seven petitions made to God the Father. The first three, more God-centred, draw us toward Him for His glory; it is characteristic of love to think first of the beloved. These petitions suggest in particular what we ought to ask of Him: the sanctification of His Name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the fulfilment of His Will. The last four petitions present to the Father of Mercies our wretchedness and our expectations. They ask Him to feed us, to forgive us, to sustain us in temptations and to free us from the Evil One.



Week 68

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 588 – 598

What does “Hallowed be The Name” mean?

To hallow or make holy the Name of God is above all a prayer of praise that acknowledges God as holy. In fact, God revealed His Holy Name to Moses and wanted His people to be consecrated for Him as a holy nation in which He would dwell.

How is the name of God made holy in us and in the world?

To make holy the Name of God, who calls us “to holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7) is to desire that our baptismal consecration animate our whole life. In addition, it is to ask – with our lives and our prayers – that the Name of God be known and blessed by every human being.

What does the Church ask for when she prays “Thy Kingdom come”?

The Church prays for the final coming of the Kingdom of God through Christ’s return in glory. The Church prays also that the Kingdom of God increase from now on through people’s sanctification in the Spirit and through their commitment to the service of justice and peace in keeping with the Beatitudes. This petition is the cry of the Spirit and the Bride: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Why pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

The will of the Father is that, “all men be saved” (1 Timothy 2:4). For this Jesus came: to perfectly fulfil the saving will of His Father. We pray God our Father to unite our will to that of His Son after the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints. We ask that this loving plan be fully realised on earth as it is already in heaven. It is through prayer that we can discern “what is the will of God” (Romans 12:2) and have the “steadfastness to do it” (Hebrews 10:36).

What is the sense of the petition “Give us this day our daily bread”?

Asking God with the filial trust of children for the daily nourishment which is necessary for us all we recognise how good God is, beyond all goodness. We ask also for the grace to know how to act so that justice and solidarity may allow the abundance of some to remedy the needs of others.

What is the specifically Christian sense of this petition?

Since “man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), this petition equally applies to hunger for the *Word of God* and for the *Body of Christ* received in the Eucharist as well as hunger for the Holy Spirit. We ask this with complete confidence for *this day* – God’s “today” – and this is given to us above all in the Eucharist which anticipates the banquet of the Kingdom to come.

Why do we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”?

By asking God the Father to pardon us, we acknowledge before Him that we are sinners. At the same time, we proclaim His mercy because in His Son and through the Sacraments “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Still our petition will be answered only if we for our part have forgiven first.

How is forgiveness possible?

Mercy can penetrate our hearts only if we ourselves learn how to forgive – even our enemies. Now even if it seems impossible for us to satisfy this requirements, the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit can, like Christ, love even to love’s extreme; it can turn injury into compassion and transform hurt into intercession. Forgiveness participates in the Divine Mercy and is a high-point of Christian prayer.

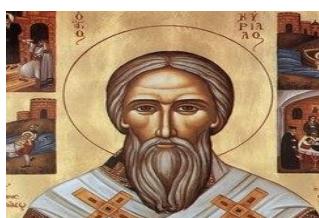
What does “Lead us not into Temptation” mean?

We ask God our Father not to leave us alone and in the power of temptation. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us know how to discern, on the one hand, between a trial that makes us grow in goodness and a temptation that leads to sin and death and, on the other hand, between being tempted and consenting to temptation. This petition unites us to Jesus who overcame temptation by His prayer. It requests the grace of vigilance and of final perseverance.

Why do we conclude by asking “But deliver us from evil”?

“Evil” indicates the person of Satan who opposes God and is “the deceiver of the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). Victory over the devil has already been won by Christ. We pray, however, that the human family be freed from Satan and his works. We also ask for the precious gift of peace and the grace of perseverance as we wait for the coming of Christ who will free us definitively from the Evil One.

What is the meaning of the “final Amen”?



“At the end of the prayer, you say ‘Amen’ and thus you ratify by this word that means ‘so be it’ all that is contained in this prayer that God has taught us”: St Cyril of Jerusalem

Week 69

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 1- 8

WHAT IS THE PLAN OF GOD FOR MAN?

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. In the fullness of time, God the Father sent His Son as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, fallen into sin, thus calling all into His Church and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, making them adopted children and heirs of His eternal happiness.

MAN'S CAPACITY FOR GOD

WHY DOES MAN HAVE A DESIRE FOR GOD?

God Himself, in creating man in His own image, has written upon his heart the desire to see Him. Even if this desire is often ignored, God never ceases to draw man to himself because only in God will he find and live the fullness of truth and happiness for which he never stops searching. By nature and by vocation, therefore, man is a religious being, capable of entering into communion with God. This intimate and vital bond with God confers on man his fundamental dignity.



**“You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised...
You have made us for yourself and our heart is
restless until it rests in you”.**
Saint Augustine of Hippo.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO KNOW GOD WITH ONLY THE LIGHT OF HUMAN REASON?

Starting from creation - that is from the world and from the human person - through reason alone one can know God with certainty as the origin and end of the universe, as the highest good and as infinite truth and beauty.

IS THE LIGHT OF REASON ALONE SUFFICIENT TO KNOW THE MYSTERY OF GOD?

In coming to a knowledge of God by the light of reason alone man experiences many difficulties. Indeed, on his own he is unable to enter into the intimacy of the divine mystery. This is why he stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed this understanding, but also about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error.

HOW CAN WE SPEAK ABOUT GOD?

By taking as our starting point the perfections of man and of the other creatures which are a reflection, albeit a limited one, of the infinite perfection of God, we are able to speak about God with all people. We must, however, continually purify our language insofar as it is image-bound and imperfect, realising that we can never fully express the infinite mystery of God.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

WHAT DOES GOD REVEAL TO MAN?

God in His Goodness and Wisdom reveals Himself. With deeds and words, He reveals Himself and His plan of loving goodness which He decreed from all eternity in Christ. According to this plan, all people by the grace of the Holy Spirit are to share in the Divine Life as adopted “sons” in the only begotten Son of God.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST STAGES OF GOD'S REVELATION?

From the very beginning, God manifested Himself to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and invited them to intimate communion with Himself. After their fall, He did not cease His revelation to them but promised salvation for all their descendants. After the flood, He made a covenant with Noah, a covenant between Himself and all living beings.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STAGES OF GOD'S REVELATION?



God chose Abraham, calling him out of his country, making him “the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:5), and promising to bless in him “all the nations of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the divine promise made to the patriarchs. God formed Israel as His chosen people, freeing them from slavery in Egypt, establishing with them the covenant of Mount Sinai, and, through Moses, giving them His law.

The prophets proclaimed a radical redemption of the people and a salvation which would include all nations in a new and everlasting covenant. From the people of Israel and from the house of King David, would be born the Messiah, Jesus.

Week 70

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 9- 17

WHAT IS THE FULL AND DEFINITIVE STAGE OF GOD'S REVELATION?

The full and definitive stage of God's Revelation is accomplished in His Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, the mediator and fullness of revelation. He, being the only-begotten Son of God made man, is the perfect and definitive Word of the Father. In the sending of the Son and the gift of the Spirit, Revelation is now fully complete, although the faith of the Church must gradually grasp its full significance over the course of centuries.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF PRIVATE REVELATIONS?

While not belonging to the deposit of faith, private revelations may help a person to live the faith as long as they lead us to Christ. The Magisterium of the Church, which has the duty of evaluating such private revelations, cannot accept those which claim to surpass or correct that definitive Revelation which is Christ.

THE TRANSMISSION OF DIVINE REVELATION

WHY AND IN WHAT WAY IS DIVINE REVELATION TRANSMITTED?

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), that is, of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christ must be proclaimed to all according to His own command, “Go forth and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19). And this is brought about by Apostolic Tradition.



WHAT IS APOSTOLIC TRADITION?

Apostolic Tradition is the transmission of the message of Christ, brought about from the very beginnings of Christianity by means of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship and inspired writings. The apostles transmitted all they received from Christ and learned from the Holy Spirit to their successors, the bishops, and through them to all generations until the end of the world.

IN WHAT WAYS DOES APOSTOLIC TRADITION OCCUR?

Apostolic Tradition occurs in two ways: through the living transmission of the Word of God (also simply called Tradition) and through Sacred Scripture which is the same proclamation of salvation in written form.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITION AND SACRED SCRIPTURE?

Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out of the same divine well-spring and together make up one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation.

TO WHOM IS THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH ENTRUSTED?

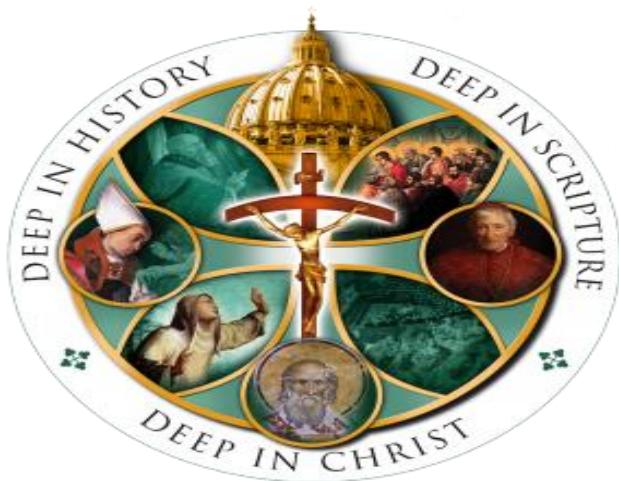
The Apostles entrusted the deposit of faith to the whole of the Church. Thanks to its supernatural sense of faith the people of God as a whole, assisted by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Magisterium of the Church, never ceases to welcome, to penetrate more deeply and to live more fully from the gift of divine revelation.

TO WHOM IS GIVEN THE TASK OF AUTHENTICALLY INTERPRETING THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH?

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the deposit of faith has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone, that is, to the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and to the bishops in communion with him. To this Magisterium, which in the service of the Word of God enjoys the certain charism of truth, belongs also the task of defining dogmas which are formations of the truth contained in Divine Revelation. This authority of the magisterium also extends to those truths necessarily connected with Revelation.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND THE MAGISTERIUM?

Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium are so closely united with each other 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.



Week 71

DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium to the Catechism paragraphs: 18- 24

SACRED SCRIPTURE

WHY DOES SACRED SCRIPTURE TEACH THE TRUTH?

Because God Himself is the author of Sacred Scripture. For this reason it is said to be inspired and to teach without error those truths which are necessary for our salvation. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors who wrote what He wanted to teach us. The Christian faith, however, is not a “religion of the Book,” but of the Word of God – “not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living” (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux).



HOW IS SACRED SCRIPTURE TO BE READ?

Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church according to three criteria:

1. It must be read with attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture;
2. It must be read within the living Tradition of the Church;
3. It must be read with attention to the analogy of faith, that is, the inner harmony which exists among the truths of the faith themselves.

WHAT IS THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE?

The Canon of Scripture is the complete list of the sacred writings which the Church has come to recognise through Apostolic Tradition. The Canon consists of 46 books of the Old Testament and 27 of the New.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true Word of God. All of the books of the Old Testament are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value. They bear witness to the Divine Pedagogy (teaching) of God’s saving love. They are written, above all, to prepare for the coming of Christ the Saviour of the universe.

WHAT IMPORTANCE DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT HAVE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The New Testament, whose central object is Jesus Christ, conveys to us the ultimate truth of Divine Revelation. Within the New Testament the four Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are the heart of all the Scriptures because they are the principle witness to the life and teaching of Jesus. As such, they hold a unique place in the Church.

WHAT IS THE UNITY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS?

Scripture is ONE insofar as the Word of God is ONE. God’s plan of salvation is ONE, and the divine inspiration of both Testaments is ONE. The Old Testament prepares for the New and the New Testament fulfils the Old; the two shed light on each other.

WHAT ROLE DOES SACRED SCRIPTURE PLAY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH?

Sacred Scripture gives support and vigour to the life of the Church. For the children of the Church, it is a confirmation of the faith, food for the soul and the fount of the spiritual life. Sacred Scripture is the soul of theology and of pastoral preaching. The Psalmist says that it is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). The Church, therefore, exhorts all to read Sacred Scripture frequently because “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (Saint Jerome).

